PRESENT-DAY PROBLEMS IN RELIGIOUS TEACHING

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PRESENT-DAY PROBLEMS IN RELIGIOUS TEACHING

A BOOK ON METHODS OF RELIGIOUS TEACHING FOR TEACHERS, PARENTS, AND TRAINING COLLEGE STUDENTS

BY

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"LESSONS ON THE LIFE OF OUR LORD," "NEW METHODS IN THE JUNIOR SUNDAY SCHOOL," ETC.

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PREFACE

THE aim of this book is to provoke thought.

By way of preface, may I quote from *The Diary of a Student in Arms*? [1]

"We were to go into the trenches for the first time the next day. I think that every one was feeling a little awed. Unfortunately we had just been to an open-air service, where the Chaplain had made desperate efforts to frighten us. The result was just what might have been expected. We were rather indignant. We might be a little frightened; but we were not going to admit it. Above all, we were not going to turn religious at the last minute because we were afraid. So one man began to scoff at the Old Testament, David and Bathsheba, Jonah and the whale, and so on. Another capped him by laughing at the Feeding of the Five Thousand. A third said that in his opinion any one who pretended to be a Christian in the army was a humbug. . . . It was not much, but enough to convince me that the soldier—in this case the soldier means the working man—does not in the least connect the things that he really believes in with Christianity. He thinks that Christianity consists in believing the Bible and setting up to be better than your neighbours. By believing the Bible he means believing that Jonah was swallowed by the whale. By

[1] Killed in battle in France.

setting up to be better than your neighbours he means not drinking, nor swearing, and preferably not smoking, being close-fisted with your money, avoiding the companionship of doubtful companions and refusing to acknowledge that such have any claim upon you.

This is nothing short of tragedy."

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

This little book is the outcome of lecture-conferences on "Religious Teaching" given to Day School Teachers and others in town and country during the past few years. The order of topics treated has been determined with some deliberation, the approach throughout being, intentionally, from *the practical point of view* of those who have to do with children and young people. "Present-Day Problems in Religious Teaching" lead us, the writer believes, to Christ—to "The Gospel Stories in the Light of To-day" (Chapter I), as affording the only real explanation of the past, comfort in the present, and hope for the future.

The problem of "The Old Testament Stories in Relation to Higher Criticism" (Chapter II) is next faced, because only by the standard of the Gospel teaching and by the help of Christ's Revelation can we profitably approach their difficulties. From the question of the telling and treatment of Bible Stories from the Old and New Testaments, we can proceed to "The Problem of Memory Work and Modern Educational Methods" and the practical teaching questions of Recapitulation, Revision, Expression Work, etc. (Chapter III).

"The Problem of Prayer and Reverence," with the teaching of hymns, psalms, prayers, and some consideration of what prayer and reverence really mean, has been deliberately postponed to Chapter IV, as the end and climax of the work described in the previous chapters. Of most of us it can be literally said, in Christ's words: "No man cometh to the Father but by Me." It is only if our conception of God be truly Christ-like, if we have apprehended aright the significance of the Gospels in the light of to-day, that we can profitably consider how to lead our children to Prayer and Worship.

But this Prayer and Worship, this discovery of the Message and Personality of Christ, must not be confined to so-called religious teaching; hence Chapter V deals with the entire scope of our daily educational work, under the title of "The Christian Method in Education." The difficulty of carrying this ideal into practice on the one hand, and the encouragement and joy it assuredly gives, and has given, to both teacher and child on the other hand, lead us into practical considerations for the present and suggestions and hopes for the future; this is the topic of the last chapter, "The Child's Unrealised Universe."

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PRESENT DAY PROBLEMS IN RELIGIOUS TEACHING

CHAPTER I

THE GOSPEL STORIES IN THE LIGHT OF TO-DAY

A TEACHER'S problems usually present themselves in concrete form, expressed through the personality of some particular child. One such problem will serve to open our discussion.

He was an eleven-year-old boy, with whom the writer fell into talk one evening in a London street. It appeared that he was accustomed to work in a shop each Friday night and throughout the whole of every Saturday, besides shopping nightly for his widowed mother after school was over. Obviously he, the eldest of three children, was her great stand-by.

"She often says, 'What would I do without you?'" he told me. It came out that his father had been killed in the war.

"Mother says she'd like to die too—often and often—if it wasn't for us children. I tell her if she did die, she'd perhaps want to come alive again."

He went on to talk about his father, "away in Heaven," as he put it.

"*I* shan't never get there," he ended sadly.

"Why?" I asked.

"Aren't good enough. You have to be 'good' to get there. They tell us all about Heaven at school. Good," he went on (in response to a would-be comforting remark), "means being good *every* day and doing turns to people *all* the time." He paused; then added, with a challenging look round at me: "I think it's very difficult. It's very hard to do good turns all day long, *I* think."

We walked on together. Presently he repeated heavily, "I shan't never get there. . . . If you aren't good," he went on in a lowered tone, in which there lurked a touch of fear, "there's another place you have to go to—it's Hell. . . . Yes, every one goes there who isn't good. Old Satan lives there—he's always trying to make people bad—*he* never wants to be good—he's always keeping people from going to Heaven, he is. . . . I shan't never get to Heaven," he repeated, with a hard finality. . . . "It's a 'mystery'" (how did he get that word?). . . . "You've got to think it over for yourself."

Then his wistful note changed; he went on with an ominously gathering shade of opposition and detachment—

"You've got to make up your mind if you're *going* to be good or not."

(He had evidently decided "not"—not hastily, but with deliberation.)

"I shan't get to Heaven," he repeated, "I shan't. . . . I shall go into the 'Railway' when I grow up, like my father, and *rise* and *rise* and *rise*. That's what *I* shall do."

I tried to say something, but nothing that I could think of to say seemed to make any difference to that strangely unchildlike outlook of his—cold, aloof, calculating, despairing; so utterly did he trust his teacher's word—so entirely had Hope and Joy been destroyed in him in the name of Religion and by the method of Religious Teaching to which he had been subjected.

Is it not time for a very fundamental change in the way we approach the subject of Retribution? For it cannot be denied that we teachers of to-day are facing a situation which demands from us a new sincerity and a fresh candour. We cannot go on any longer trying to teach our children what, at the bottom of our hearts, we have ceased to believe. We cannot keep our religion in a water-tight compartment and ignore the stormy problems of the time in which we live. We are obliged to ask ourselves urgent questions.

How much do we really believe of what we have so often taught? Is what we continue to teach in the "religious period" of our Day-School time-table really "Religion" in any sense at all? What is the spiritual and practical good of this repetition and continual "learning by heart"? Do these details which we endeavour to impress upon our children as to the life and customs of an Eastern nation living hundreds of years ago in a far-off land make any actual difference to us who are living in England to-day? Why do we tell Bible stories? And if we did not go on telling these Bible stories and grinding at our Repetition and Memorising, how would it be possible to fill up the five daily periods of religious teaching? Finally

and fundamentally, how are we to go on teaching a subject so full of alarming and increasing difficulties?

A married Day-School teacher of my acquaintance found herself the other day catechised by her own nine-year-old daughter, who had been told at school the story of the Garden of Eden with the usual teacher's comments.

"Does God know everything, mother? Teacher said so."

"Yes, He does."

"Does God know what is going to happen *before* it happens?"

"Yes, He does."

"Did God make everything? Teacher said so."

"Yes."

"The Devil?"

"Yes."

"Then, if He *knew* the Devil was going to tempt Adam and Eve, *why did He make him?*"

Another nine-year-old questioned a teacher who had been elaborating the Story of the Plagues.

"Why did the beasts have to have a plague? *They* hadn't been wicked."

A six-year-old child in a large infant class on hearing the story of the sacrifice of Isaac, broke out—

"Wasn't that cruel of God?"

A boy in the lower standards remarked on another occasion scornfully—

"The world made in six days! Why, my *other* teacher says it took thousands and thousands of years."

Another child demanded—

"Why did God tell Joshua to kill *all* the people of Canaan—the women and little children too? *What had they done?*"

"Doesn't God love the Devil too?" asked another.

The questions shower upon us daily unless our children are either afraid or asleep.

In truth, we teachers are being compelled, whether we will or not, to face anew the whole question of religious teaching, and to think our way through the many problems it presents.

It is useless to tell those of us teachers who are members of the Church of England that we need only to listen to the voice of the living Church and faithfully repeat to the children her sure and certain message; for it is very difficult for us to discover the voice of the living Church of to-day. Are we to hear it in the public utterances of individual Bishops and clergy, in the Reports of the Archbishops' Committees, in Convocation or Lambeth Conference, in the weekly religious newspapers, or in the pages of our own parish magazines?

Moreover, when we perceive, as we cannot help perceiving, that the Church of to-day has many voices, and they do not all say the same thing, we are compelled to fall back for decision and interpretation upon that Spirit of the Living Church which speaks in our own mind and heart.[1] No one can take from the teacher the responsibility of interpreting for himself the utterances of that same Spirit.

If we have never before in our own lives been quite

[1] See Archbishops' Committee's *Report on The Teaching Office of the Church*, pp. 38, etc.

fearlessly honest, the time has now come when we teachers must lay aside all pretence and cowardice and face sincerely the full issues in this matter of religious teaching.

This sincerity must necessarily be an individual concern. We must learn—it is our duty to learn—all that we can from theological and historical experts, but what they tell us we must unify and assimilate in our own individual way; we cannot be delivered from the necessity laid upon every one of us in honesty and candour to think out the problems of religious teaching each for himself, giving ear to that measure of the Spirit of Wisdom that we find within us, that share which each one of us has of "the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." We teachers are also part of the Living Church of to-day, and through us also Her voice is heard.

Now let us consider some of the practical difficulties in religious teaching which daily confront us in our class-rooms.

The children we teach are living in what we call a scientific age, and we teachers are already impregnated with its spirit. Even a two-year-old knows an aeroplane and a motor-car. Nature Study and science lessons find a place throughout the entire school curriculum. We encourage our town children to visit the local museums. (The chronological table of geological periods upon the wall challenges at once the margin of the child's Bible—"The Creation of the world," 4004 B.C.) These last four years of war have made all our children terribly familiar with the application of modern science in a particular direction,

namely, for the destruction of human life. Again, later on, when leaving school, our boys and girls will come still closer to scientific problems in factory, workshop, technical class, or down the pit-shaft. Sooner or later they are certain to meet the challenge, seriously or frivolously given, "Who was Cain's wife? Was the world made in a week? What about Jonah's whale? And Balaam's ass? Who believes the Bible nowadays?"

The questioning spirit is in the air; as we have said before, it makes its appearance within our class-rooms. Some of us may regret much that such should be the case, but we cannot escape the necessity of dealing with it. It challenges the most positive and sacred assertions of the teacher, and it finds expression from the most thoughtful and earnest children.

A teacher known to the writer was recently giving a lesson on the Church Catechism to a large class of Standard VI in a poor town school. She had insisted, as her syllabus directed, upon the importance of Baptism and the necessity of being baptised as a condition of admission to the privilege of being "the child of God." One of her most eager and attentive scholars fixed astonished eyes on her, and broke out with the reproachful question: "Aren't *I* a child of God? *I* haven't been baptised."

An eight-year-old boy at the close of a "miracle" story from the Gospels added thoughtfully: "I don't think the Lord Jesus *could* have fed all those hungry people—not really."

The breath of doubt blows even within the walls

of the Infant School.[1] A teacher of the five-year-olds in a north-country school who believed literally in the story of Adam and Eve had elected, as she told me, to "illustrate" the creation of Eve by a large blackboard drawing of a bone.

"You see that bone, children," she said. They looked at it spellbound. "God wanted to make a woman for Adam. God wanted to make Eve. So He made Adam go to sleep, and He took a little bone out of his side, just like this one, children, and He made it into a woman! *You* couldn't make a woman out of a bone, could you, children?"

"No," responded the children with docility, but one little boy, the most thoughtful in the class, put up his hand.

"Teacher," he said doubtfully and seriously, "was it *really* true? *Really?*"

It is worth while pausing to notice that this spirit of challenge and inquiry is manifesting itself among our children and young people in a certain radical change of attitude, no less important because the children and young people themselves are largely unconscious of this change. Not only the miracles of the Old Testament are being challenged, but also those of the New. Just as it is no longer sufficient to silence a questioner by saying, "The Bible says

[1] Even in the nursery! A three-year-old of my acquaintance asked her mother one day *à propos* of nothing but her own reflection: "Mummy, what *is* the difference between God and Jesus?" It is absurd to say that young children are only interested in sense-impressions. Philosophical questions interest them just as much as questions about familiar objects, or, rather, the latter *lead* to metaphysical questions. This child of three endlessly asked: "Why?" "Why must people have a ring when they're married?" etc.

this or that" (if we are to give such a questioner any real and permanent help), so now it is impossible to repress honest thought or satisfy an urgent inquiry by saying, "Our Lord says this or that," without further explanation and discussion. Our young people may be silenced by the authoritative statement while in our presence; but among their intimates they will discuss its truth. There is far more of this unrest and desire to "prove all things" among children and young people than we imagine.

Surely we teachers must be as fearless as are our young people and our children if we mean to give them any effective help or leading. Moreover, we must avoid adding to the difficulties our scholars must inevitably face by creating new difficulties for them through our own faulty methods of teaching or our unwisely dogmatic statements. To teach the children, as they are still being taught in many schools, that we believe Jesus to be God *because* He performed miracles, is to lead the child towards the disastrous conclusion that if he doubts the credibility of a single miracle, his faith in Our Lord is tottering to a fall, and further, it is to ground the Divinity of Our Lord upon a foundation He Himself discouraged.

"Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe."

The teacher's habit of forcing upon young children a too early generalisation in verbal form of their religious experience is responsible for much slipshod thinking and later reaction.

I recollect on one occasion hearing an Infant Day-School teacher follow up her story of the Feeding of

the Five Thousand with such an attempt at formulation as the following—

"Why could Our Lord feed those hungry people?" she asked.

"Because He loved them," "Because He was good," "Because He was kind," were the various answers eagerly proffered.

"No," was the teacher's answer to each attempt, and at last she was driven to the confession of despair. "That's not what *I* mean. *Why* could Our Lord feed those hungry people?" At length, by some suggesting and urging, she obtained the answer she wanted, "Because He was *God*."

"Yes," she said with relief, "Our Lord could feed those hungry people *because He was God*. Say it after me," and the children obediently gave themselves up to repetition.

Yet the children were quite right; the Spirit of Truth was speaking in their hearts, as their answers clearly showed. The word "God" to them at this stage of their development was merely a proper name, probably associated solely with the concept of the Heavenly Father and not with Jesus Christ. "Divinity" to them had already become revealed in the only understandable terms of Kindness and Love.

The teacher had discouraged a child's search for Truth and his expression of it when found, and she had not done anything to awaken an understanding of the real meaning of Our Lord's Divinity.

It is important for us teachers of to-day, as never perhaps in the past, to re-examine with some care the

pregnant words and phrases we so frequently use. Take, for example, the word "miracle."

We "teach" (as we say) the *word* itself quite early; it appears in our syllabuses of religious instruction—"Six *miracles*, one of which must be . . ." etc.; we require our children to "Repeat the *miracle* of the Paralysed Man, or "the *miracle* of the Walking on the Water."

Many of us have become quite accustomed to using the word without much reflection upon its meaning, or else we have contented ourselves with the traditional definition, "A miracle is an event contrary to the laws of Nature." The thoughtful teacher desiring to train thoughtful children can no longer be content with such a superficial treatment of the matter. Our belief in the Fatherhood of God, "Maker of Heaven and Earth," carries with it a belief in the essential unity of the universe—in the world as made by God and as a revelation of His Nature and Power. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." Moreover, this "making" we have come to see is according to inexorable law. The world in which we live stands revealed to us to-day in the light of modern science as a world of order. To every cause an effect; for every effect a cause—

> "All Nature is but art, unknown to thee;
> All chance, direction, which thou canst not see."

We live in a world which has come to be what it is through the working of laws which we call "the laws of Nature," but which, if we believe in God the Creator, we must also believe are the laws of God,

unalterable, eternal, like God Himself. If God is revealed to us as always working by law, then if He should at any time "perform a miracle" by a suspension of existing known laws, that can only be by bringing into operation some higher law hitherto not known. A miracle may quite well be an "event contrary to the laws of Nature or God," if by "laws" we mean those at present conceived of by man; but the miracle must, at the same time, be an "event" according to some as yet unknown law, which is no less a law of Nature or of God because it has not so far become part of the recognised body of human knowledge. A better definition of the word "miracle," indeed, would seem to be, "A miracle is the operation of a law *hitherto* not understood." [1]

Our young people are inclined to think that "miracles do not happen nowadays." To tell them, as we have often been accustomed to do, that miracles did happen by the power of God once upon a time, in the land of Palestine or Egypt, but that now God does not manifest His power in that way, is to give a profoundly unsatisfying answer.

"Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting Thou art God,
To endless years the same."

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[1] "A miracle does not happen in contradiction to Nature, but in contradiction to what is known to us of Nature."—Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, xxi. 8.

"For the ordinary materialist, the true principle of science, that everything in Nature happens according to law, has been converted into another principle—that everything happens according to such laws as we already know in matter, and that other laws there are not." "What is a miracle from the standpoint of one-half of the world can belong to law from the standpoint of the universe."—Du Prel, *Philosophy of Mysticism.*

If we tell our young people that the age of miracles was once a reality, but that now it is past, they are only too likely to think that if miracles belong to a past age and distant land, so also does the religion with which they are associated, and neither the miracles nor the God they reveal have much relevance or help for present needs or problems.

" It all happened so long ago," sighed a village girl in her teens, at the close of a somewhat remote " Bible " lesson.

As the " miraculous " Bible stories are usually presented to our young people, the conclusion to which the thoughtful among them are driven is that either the miracles are incredible or else that they are irrelevant and uninteresting. This we believe to be the feeling of hundreds and thousands of adults and children to-day, and it is known to every teacher unless he deliberately works to repress thought or never succeeds in arousing any thought at all.

" In another land and clime,
Long ago and far away,
Was a little Baby born
On the first glad Christmas Day."

So runs the childish hymn, but the children and teachers of to-day want a religion that will help them *now*, one that will take account of the present facts of life, and prove its value by its relevancy to the situations in which they find themselves.

" Is not God now i' the world His power first made ? " " Long ago and far away " is of no interest, except in so far as it explains " here and now," or is an escape from " here and now " into a land of fairy

tale and myth. There must be room in life for fairy tale and myth, but a religion that is merely fairy tale is surely a very inadequate companion to the journey of life. Is it the fact that religion has been so largely of this nature—standing *alongside* of life, but separate from it—that is mainly responsible for the world in which we find ourselves to-day, where the organised Christian Churches seem powerless in presence of a situation too tremendous for them to influence? [1]

Our religious teaching must find voice in a language intelligible to the ears of this generation. Miracles, like all other questions, must be squarely faced and brought into relation with present-day thought and need.

In truth, the word "miracle" itself, with its stereotyped associations, might be banished from the teacher's vocabulary (we have, if we want it, warrant for this—St. John, see Revised Version, uses the word "sign"); if we need such a word—and it is highly doubtful whether we do—let us go back nearer to the original meaning, and use its English equivalent, "wonder."

Missionaries in Central Africa have told us that the primitive peoples among whom they work "marvel" (are filled with "wonder") at the newspaper drawn so eagerly by the missionary from his belated mail-bag. They crowd round his tent door, watching him curiously as he unfolds it and sits absorbed in its contents. "The talking paper" they call it; to them it is a "wonder"—a "miracle," and, like the telephone wire and the lightning conductor, it exem-

[1] See Report of Archbishop's Committee on Industrial Problems.

plifies to them "the operation of a law hitherto not understood." In our fuller knowledge, the daily newspaper, the telephone, the lightning conductor, nay, the sunrise and the thunderstorm, are not called by the name of "miracle" at all.

It is likely, indeed, that as our knowledge of the operations of God's laws increases, we shall use the *word* "miracle" less and less. Faith will more and more "vanish into sight" as the Kingdom comes "on earth as it is in Heaven." Miracles as "miracles," in our phraseology, may decrease, but there will be to the thoughtful not any decreased sense of wonder or mystery.

> "Let knowledge grow from more to more,
> But more of reverence in us dwell."

As Du Prel says in his *Philosophy of Mysticism:* "As little as a landscape ceases to be beautiful by being painted . . . as little does Nature cease to merit our respect when we have succeeded in explaining her." In point of fact, the new knowledge accessible to us teachers of to-day is helping us to understand the miracles of the New Testament in a way quite impossible to teachers of a former generation, but it is vitally important to distinguish between sincere scientific or philosophical investigation on the one hand and sensational journalism on the other, and we shall best help those who are too ready to accept credulously any statements about phenomena of a super-sensual character by a fearless and sympathetic attitude to the whole subject on which, doubtless, we have yet much to learn.

As we read our daily or weekly newspapers, and talk with our acquaintances in 'buses and trams and trains, we cannot but be conscious of a new and growing interest from all sorts of unexpected quarters in the subject of the working of MIND, and in particular of that region of Mind which we are beginning to call "subconscious" or "unconscious" or "subliminal." Thousands of people have been deeply interested, even if not convinced, by Professor Oliver Lodge's *Raymond*. The interest in Spiritualism and Psychical Research has not decreased of late years, but markedly grown. This interest has deepened since the war began. No considerable group of teachers can come together without discovering some among them who maintain that they had first-hand, or at any rate second-hand, experience of "war" dreams or intuitions.

A book could be filled with recent accounts of experiences of intercourse with the dying or those who have passed beyond the gate of death. Sometimes this kind of experience is of an unseen, indefinable presence; sometimes words are heard, features or lights are visible, even a touch is felt.

Some will be inclined to put aside all such reported experiences as nonsensical, unhealthy, or dangerous; the careful hearer will not so easily pronounce a dogmatic judgment; he will discriminate and continue to keep an open mind; and after all, many will feel that in the Church's Doctrine of the Communion of Saints there is ample room for any new knowledge which scientific research may bring us.

Naturally each case must be judged on its own merits. Even when all available facts are to hand many

different explanations can be offered of the phenomena themselves. And it is important to remember how harmful to both body and mind may be any deliberate attempt to *cultivate* such experiences. But what emerges from the consideration of such reports is the existence of an undeniable conviction and belief in the reality of the experiences on the part of the people immediately concerned. To them "*miracles*" (and surely such experiences can rightly be called so) *happen to-day*. And may not such beliefs and convictions lead the thoughtful teacher to find new reality and credibility in the Gospel accounts of the Transfiguration on the Mount, the Ascension, the Resurrection, the Conversion of St. Paul on the Damascus road?

Further, the new and growing interest in the working of mind has been manifesting itself of late in a fresh expansion of medical knowledge, and this fresh knowledge is not merely the property of the professional and academic; rumours of it find their way into our daily newspapers and our common talk. "Shell shock" is unhappily a familiar word in many households ("nervous breakdown" unfortunately no less), and any gathering of teachers will contain those who have among their own friends or relations sufferers from this most unhappy malady. Its treatment and cure is a matter of interest to us all, and increasingly, as we know, doctors and nurses are treating such by suggestion, hypnotism, psycho-analysis, mental healing of various kinds.

A popular daily newspaper, read by millions of readers, recently headed a conspicuous column with

the words, "Shell-shock patients—new methods of cure." Not infrequently we come across a case of sudden cure among these "shell-shock" patients. Literally "the blind receive their sight, the deaf hear." There is naturally a widespread interest in such cures and the methods which lead to them. Very few teachers will be able truthfully to assert that among their relations and friends they do not number at least one person interested in the methods of Christian Science or Spiritual Healing. As medical science investigates and classifies the causes of disease, it is but natural that the conviction should grow and deepen among religious people that disease is not of God, but of man, that the Spirit of Goodness is also the Spirit of Life and Health and Healing, and that methods of spiritual healing may have more to give us than we at present realise. It is a significant fact that within the Church of England alone at least three societies exist to-day to emphasise among their members the possibility of this healing method. All this gives, as we have said before, new relevancy and credibility to the healing miracles of the New Testament.

If a London physician in his surgery can say to a paralysed woman brought before him on a couch, "Rise up and walk," and she does rise up and does walk, so that all can see, does not a thoughtful teacher find fresh corroboration and significance in his oft-told Gospel stories of the paralysed man let down through the roof, Blind Bartimeus by the roadside begging, and the healing of the cripple in the street of Lystra? [1]

[1] See Dr. Schofield, *The Unconscious Mind*, pp. 393 *et seq.*

In yet another direction does the new knowledge of to-day help towards a fuller understanding of the New Testament miracles. Modern science has put before us a new view of *matter;* it is not the inert, solid thing we imagined it to be. Men of science no longer merely talk in terms of "atoms"—they strain our imaginations with "electrons" and yet finer units. They tell us that matter is not at rest, but continually in motion. The most compact object we can see is honeycombed with space: that seemingly compact, motionless poker is really a vortex of "atoms," "electrons," "units of electricity," or what not, whirling round so fast that we cannot see them move, and all held together by some wonderful invisible force that the religious person cannot but call the "Power of God."

"Matter and spirit are continuous," or "All matter is spiritual," or "Matter and spirit are but two aspects of the same great thing," men are saying. Wireless telegraphy is so common we forget its wonder. X- and Röntgen rays have come so quickly into use that we have forgotten to call them miracles. The human body, too, is more mysterious than we thought it.

Does not all this but deepen the wonder and interest and credibility of such stories as Our Lord's Walking on the Water, the Transfiguration, the Resurrection Appearances? [1]

Does not the new knowledge lighten up for us of

[1] If the present limits of our knowledge do not as yet provide any conclusive explanation or corroboration of such a story as the Feeding of the Five Thousand, we may yet surely hold that such explanation and corroboration is only a matter of time. The Spirit shall indeed lead us "into all truth."

to-day many of those mediæval stories of the Saints (*e. g.* the Stigmata of St. Francis) which once, maybe, we tossed aside as unbelievable legends and fabrications? Miracles did happen once, we may assure ourselves and the children, for they have been happening ever since; they are happening to-day, and may happen to ourselves to-morrow or in ten years' time.

The new knowledge of to-day is thus no hindrance, but the greatest assistance to our religious teaching. There is a special sense, however, in which we teachers may get help at the present time from our study of the Gospels. Through the labours of "Higher Critics"[1] —of scholars who have specialised upon the study of the New Testament, we can now, to a certain extent, understand how the Gospels themselves came to be written. We gather that at first they were not *written* at all (so vividly were the acts and teaching of the Master imprinted on the memories of His disciples). Then gradually attempts at written records were made, many of which must have perished. We have reason to believe in the existence of at least one lost collection of deeds—one lost collection of "words" or "sayings." The earliest complete record, scholars tell us, we must find in St. Mark's Gospel, and of that the last page at least is missing. Later still we may place the Gospels of St. Luke and St. Matthew—both based jointly on St. Mark's account and possibly upon

[1] People sometimes speak of the "so-called Higher Criticism," "the self-styled Higher Critic," and so on, as if Higher meant superior. The name is used in distinction to Textual Criticism, and is called Higher because it deals with the books at a higher or earlier stage. Such questions as authorship, relation to other books, compositeness, variety of sources, and date, are the material of this "Higher Criticism."

some " fifth Gospel " of which we have no other trace. (It is a fascinating task for a teacher, even if ignorant of Hebrew or Greek, to follow the instructions given by Dean Armitage Robinson in his *Study of the Gospels*, pp. 25, 86, 159, etc., and, by writing down from St. Luke and St. Matthew what is common to both and is yet not contained in St. Mark, to recover in part this " fifth Gospel." [1])

Last of all comes the Gospel of St. John, latest in time, nearest in spirit, as many of us will agree, to the mind of the Master Himself.

Moreover, in yet another direction does the new knowledge of to-day come to our aid. Modern missionary enterprise has for some years brought us " Palestine Exhibitions," with tableaux and curios from many lands. Books on Eastern travel have multiplied. Of late the fathers and brothers and uncles of our children have been fighting in Mesopotamia, or following Allenby in Palestine, and they have been writing letters home. The " Palestine and Syria Relief Fund " has brought the needs of the East before us all.

[1] " A document which has, as a matter of fact, completely disappeared, and can only be reconstructed by critical methods from the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke. . . . It contains a very large amount of discourse and a comparatively small amount of narrative. . . . A common narrative seems to have lain before St. Matthew and St. Luke, containing the record of a sermon delivered in presence of a large crowd . . . It commenced with the beatitudes, probably followed by the woes . . . our analysis . . . reveals clear traces of an earlier record lying behind St. Matthew and St. Luke, and nearer to the actual moment (who shall say how much nearer?) when our Lord spoke in human flesh to men."

Also see p. 91 for the chief characteristics of this " Nonmarcan Document," Robinson, *Study of the Gospels.*

We can now, if we will take even a little pains, see the Gospel happenings against an Eastern background of custom, life and thought inevitably denied to the teachers of a past generation; we can make the personality of Jesus of Nazareth real to us and real to our children in a way not possible before.

We should indeed be unwise if we did not make use of these new helps, yet we must remember that they are only aids to our own thought and study, and to the formation of our individual conviction and point of view, for personal and individual conviction and belief will always remain the only basis for any real religious teaching.

"To teach is to convey straight from your heart and mind into the heart and mind of other people knowledge which, having been acted upon and tested—knowledge upon which much, and not less indeed, than your own self having been staked—has become a passion and a belief—that is what I mean by teaching. It is not 'twice two,' it is not the date of a play and the use of the globes, it is not the Kings of Israel and Judah—those things have their place. The critical thing is what a man believes—believes as the result of trial at the point where belief, having been tested by experience and based upon knowledge, has become a burning conviction—it is the sum total of himself."—(Campagnac, *Elements of Religion and Religious Teaching.*)

The teacher's necessary and present duty is to read the Gospel afresh in the light of to-day and answer each for himself the question: "What think ye of Christ?" The answer must be individual if it is to

be honest and sincere, and everything in our religious teaching will depend upon our answer. We teachers must read again those four short Gospels in hours snatched out of the turmoil of to-day, and ask ourselves, "What do we get out of them all?" We find even this simple task a difficult one; we know the Gospel words so well—we learnt the Parables and Miracles long ago for examination purposes—and the story is so fatally familiar, so far from fresh. But we push on; we force ourselves to read the well-known words. Sometimes we read slowly and ponderingly, to gain the fulness of their meaning; sometimes we read them rapidly, so as to get a view of the whole, of the dynamic power of the tale. Further, as we read, we must remind ourselves of our necessarily changed view-point as regards the whole question of the inspiration of the Bible. A past generation loved the Bible as the verbally-inspired "Word of God," and regarded it as one book of uniform spiritual value throughout—dictated, as it were, by God to man, who wrote down the message much as a mechanical telegraph wire or gramophone might transmit its record to-day. We modern teachers can still love the Bible as the Word of God, but we recognise that its Divine message comes to us not through the medium of unintelligent automata, but through living, thinking, erring human beings like ourselves.

With such a view-point we find in its pages a newer and fuller message. We must read, then, our Gospels trying to get behind the Gospel writer to the Personality of Whom he tells. Gradually, as we read, the impression of this Personality grows on us, until at last we

find that we can say: "I see You—I hear Your message. I accept it. I will try to pass it on."

And this is the conclusion to which some of us find that we have come, when, from reading the Gospels in the light of to-day, we look up to face the problems of to-morrow.

To us Jesus Christ comes as the supreme and satisfying Revelation of the Nature of God and of Goodness; He answers for us the questions we are always wanting to put: "What is the ultimate Power behind all that we find within us and outside us? What is the controlling power—the greatest thing in the world? And if we call this GOD, *what is God like?*"

Our Lord's answer is that God is a Spirit—He is Love; He is our "Heavenly Father"; He is always turned in mercy and compassion towards His children, however they behave; He sends His sun to shine equally on the evil and on the good; He is not angry or variable; He is kind to the unthankful and the evil; nor does He punish as we human people punish each other, though He leaves us free to punish ourselves; He loves all nations—not one alone nor one above another; He loves all souls—not one alone nor one above another; He is with all in life or death, even with a little sparrow falling to the ground.

But Our Lord tells not only what God is like, but what goodness is. Goodness is *Love*. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; by *this* shall men know that ye are My disciples." "Be ye perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect," merciful and forgiving, as He is merciful and forgiving.

The law of the universe is the law of Love; by this law the Christian must direct his way; unto conformity to this he must bring his life—or he will inevitably bring suffering upon himself some time, somewhere; moreover, he will go on suffering until he learns the law, or makes it the law of his being, for the law is inexorable. Only Love *works*, meets, in the long run, the "pragmatic" test; all else brings hatred, sorrow, conflict, pain; for the wages of sin is indeed death to every part of us that strives against the law. What is against the law of Love must change or come to nought.

We recognise frankly the extreme difficulty of holding such a belief and living in the world of to-day; yet in this, the fundamental message of the Gospels—the essence of Christianity—lies, as it seems to some of us, the only comfort for the present, explanation of the past, and hope for the future. The phrase of last year, "A League of Nations" (which has thrilled so many millions, however far in reality it may fall short of its ideal), is itself a testimony to the essential truth of this belief.

Having defined, then, in this or in some other way, our "message," let us consider how we may pass it on to our children.

We may do this, we shall agree, in many ways: through the "atmosphere" of our school or class-room; the touch of our own personality upon each child, both in the religious hour and outside it; through our treatment of the children's delinquencies; through the daily "worship" and exercises of prayer and praise; through pictures and symbols; through dis-

cussion; through stories of all kinds. Narrowing our inquiry, let us consider first the problem of Bible stories, and especially in the present chapter the problem of those Bible stories which we draw from the Gospels.

It may be helpful to the teacher to consider here the example of Our Lord Himself. It was, we like to notice, by a method of comradeship that Our Lord taught His disciples. He kept them with Him, and gradually they came to realise the full meaning of Himself and His teaching. At first they whispered to one another, "What manner of Man is this?"—only later could they say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God." So in our Gospel stories we give our children some of this sense of comradeship—they go about with Our Lord and get to know Him; they follow His footsteps, and to a certain extent go through the same process of discovery as did the disciples of the Gospel days. Love, to children (and perhaps to all of us), must find some *form;* these Gospel stories are to the child concrete examples of the Love in Whom we believe. Again, these Gospel stories which we tell to our children may serve to develop in them imagination and sympathy. These are but other words for the "New Commandment," "Love one another; by this shall men know that ye are My disciples." Does the world to-day need anything more desperately than a wide diffusion of the gifts of imagination and sympathy? The saddest product of war-time and after is the destruction of sympathies, the erection of new barriers between men and men. Each week that passes shows more clearly the impermanence of any

unity that is founded merely on a common fear. For the years of peace in which we hope our children are to live we teachers may be preparing in our school and class-rooms, as we widen the circle of our children's friends and strive to develop in them the sense of brotherhood. Among all the friends which stories bring them we shall want to number the personalities of the Gospel narrative, the friends of the Friend of all the world. Through our Gospel stories Jairus' little daughter may become real to them, we may acquaint them with Peter the fisherman, Zacchæus the outcast, Blind Bartimeus, the children in the Temple; perhaps they will gain a clearer vision of the Lord Himself as they view Him through the eyes of those who followed Him about along the roads and in the villages and towns of Palestine.

We cannot over-estimate the importance of getting at the inner meaning of the Gospel story, nor of the practical difficulty of so doing. The Gospel words are over-familiar to us; we have learnt them by rote, and that has not helped us. Further, the verses are condensed; too frequently we do not realise all they say. For those who listened to Our Lord's words and watched His deeds heard those words and saw those deeds in an atmosphere of thought and tradition entirely lacking to us and to our children of to-day. Our lessons must put back for the children that which is essential to the full understanding of what was said or done. Yet here is a danger: we may easily lose the wood for the trees. The background must be only background; just so much of the Eastern setting must be given as will enable the children to pass

behind the setting to the eternal realities which are independent of place and time.

The writer can recollect a teacher's lesson on the Parable of the Lost Sheep, in which the central point of attention was an Eastern shepherd's dress and weapon and the construction of an Eastern sheepfold; on another occasion during a lesson on the miracle of Cana, the emphasis was placed throughout on the external details of the story—the number and shape of the water-pots, and whether they were filled "up to the brim." A lesson on the Resurrection has often become, as some of us have reason to know, an interesting but surely not very helpful or inspiring examination of an Eastern tomb.

"That isn't right," criticised an infant teacher on one occasion, while looking over her children's free drawings in illustration of a Bible story; "they didn't wear hats then; their houses hadn't chimneys—that's like *your* house." The little girl she was speaking to stopped drawing, rather wistfully. That Gospel story she was illustrating had become suddenly remote and apart from life; previously it had been as real as her own house and the people she met every day. A few years later, without any criticism from the teacher, she would have ceased drawing modern houses and clothes and begun to notice and portray the Eastern contrasts; but she would have done that without undue dwelling on these contrasts, without letting what was merely background usurp the foremost place. The background must be there, but so that it may be forgotten and the mind may dwell upon the central truth. And, as we have said, the central

truth we wish to teach in these Gospel stories is the Divinity of Love, the Love of God in Jesus Christ. The teacher's task is to discover in the story he is to tell some triumph of the Love of Christ—its Courage, Tranquillity, Compassion, Wisdom—and to show them forth in the telling.

Further, we teachers as story-tellers cannot help revealing to the children our own personal point of view. Our individual conception of the Personality and teaching of Christ is bound to betray itself in any Gospel story that we tell; it will escape in our tone of voice, expression of face, choice of phrase, in emphasis or omission. If we are honest, we shall frankly recognise this human element in ourselves as story-tellers; we shall find ourselves saying as we talk, "I always think"; "I fancy He meant"; "I believe He looked"; "Perhaps He"; "It seems to me"; "I imagine," etc.

If we are wise, too, we shall not merely recognise the human element in the story-teller, but the human element in the audience. Each of our children has the right, equally with the teacher, to understand and interpret the story in his own individual way. Our method of teaching should take account of this and leave the child free. The correlative to the teacher's "I think," is the teacher's question to the child, "What do *you* think?" "How do *you* think it happened?" "What do *you* think He meant?" with an assurance somehow conveyed that the child is at perfect liberty to think differently to the teacher. I recollect the encouragement of being interrupted one day by a child with the remark, "*I* don't think that

at all—*I* think He . . ." On another occasion I remember a child putting up her hand to say, "Miss, my father doesn't think a bit like you—it's quite different." The point in question would not have interested the whole class at that moment, for time was pressing, and it was obvious that Janie had a good deal to say; so there and then I fixed up with her an interview after school. We had a long, serious talk; my understanding of the child was increased, though I did not find myself in agreement with her father's belief. Later on I had a chance of meeting him, and my respect for him was deepened; but the important thing was that Janie felt quite free in my lessons to say what she (or any one else) thought, and so I had some real insight into her mind and way of viewing things.

We must take account of the human element *in the story-teller* and the human element *in the audience;* and last, but not least, we teachers must remember *the human element in the story itself.* We have our treasure in earthen vessels; our only written records of the Master come to us through the imperfect medium of erring though devoted disciples.

"Even His brethren did not believe in Him." He was always saying wistfully to His disciples, "How is it that ye do not understand?" All His life He was surrounded by unintelligent reporters. We can understand what that means. If any one has had the experience of reading over at his leisure a verbatim shorthand report of some speech he has delivered he will find the experience painful and revealing."[1]

[1] The following quotation from a London daily during the week in which the German delegates first appeared at the Peace Con-

Let us further imagine that the reporter is not very skilled, not very rapid or understanding, and not very familiar with the phraseology used by the speaker nor the subject treated. Such a speaker will find, in all probability, that at some points in the report his speech is unrecognisable. He cannot believe that he could ever have talked such nonsense. Here he has been entirely misrepresented; a negative has dropped out that actually contradicts the original sense. Here a side illustration usurps the central place in a long, careful train of reasoning which has been omitted or condensed to half a sentence. Here, again, is an illustration, but it has been tacked on to the wrong argument. Here is a metaphor treated as a solid fact; here the order is completely wrong. Finally, how *dead* and *level* it reads: tone of voice, explanatory gesture, flash of eye, expression of face, all lacking. How far the best report falls behind the living word!

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ference may serve as an illustration of the difficulty of securing uniformly accurate reports of any important occurrence.

"Wednesday's scene at Versailles will present not a few difficulties to the picturesque historian of the future when he tries to describe it with the help of the daily papers. There are not many points of observation upon which the special correspondents seem to agree—except perhaps the demeanour of M. Clemenceau, who, we gather, kept his fierce eye on the Germans all the time he was speaking, and (with characteristic courtesy, as one reporter charmingly puts it) let them know that the Allies would stand no nonsense.

"To the eyes of the majority of the correspondents Count Brockdorff-Rantzau was ghastly white; to one, at least, he looked well, with a touch of colour and bright eyes; while still another was angered by the good colour of all six envoys. Some saw the Germans bow stiffly to Clemenceau and the other heads when they came in; others assert that they took their seats without any bows. Reuter's correspondent even saw the Count bow a second time as he accepted the Peace Book; while Sir John Foster Fraser says that Brockdorff-Rantzau pushed the volume on one side."

We need to recognise fearlessly that the like was true of Jesus Christ. From the study of the Gospel records as a whole we gain our general impression of Our Lord's personality and teaching, and this provides us with a canon of judgment, but we must allow freely that we have in the Gospels often incomplete, and occasionally almost incomprehensible accounts. Why do we include in our religious instruction syllabuses such stories as that of the Gadarene Demoniac, the Withering of the Fig-tree, the Cleansing of the Temple, and the Parable of the Unjust Steward unless we are prepared to allow with frankness that the reports are so imperfect that we cannot at this period of time recover with certainty the exact originals ? [1]

We face in the Gospels instances of *altered order*

[1] I was taking the story of The Gadarene Demoniac a little while ago with a keen class of ten-year-olds, after myself reading the very suggestive treatment of it given in *Letters from an Unknown Disciple*. The children told me of themselves during the lesson that we should not now call such a one "a man with an unclean spirit," but "wild," "mad," "a lunatic." One child called him "wicked," but this was ruled out by others in the class. As we went on reading the verses, some of the children suggested that it was the spirit of "fear," "fright," that made the herd of swine run down into the sea—"they caught it from each other"—"one ran and then the others"—"perhaps they were afraid of the wild man throwing himself about," but the children were unanimous in their belief that it was *not* Our Lord Who sent the "unclean spirit" into the herd, maintaining stoutly that He loved the swine and knew they were creatures made by God. When challenged as to how it came to be written down that Our Lord "gave leave" to the unclean spirits to enter the swine, the children became rather keen over puzzling out *who told the story first*. St. Mark, they said, was not there. Most appeared to think it was a disciple who told the tale, probably St. Peter (whose boat was in use), and that he "perhaps was not near enough to hear," or "didn't remember very well," or "made a mistake." They were splendidly sure all the way through, it was evident to see, of Our Lord's victorious fearlessness and perfect love.

(cf. St. John xiv.–xvii., xiv. being, so some scholars think, the closing chapter of the discourse, to be placed after xvii.); of sentences torn from their context (cf. St. Luke xiii. 32, 33; xiv. 34; xvii. 37, etc.); of confused and now irrecoverable connections (cf. the Parable of the Vineyard and the King's Son in St. Matthew xxi., xxii., of the Door and the Shepherd in St. John x., of the Feeding of the Five Thousand and the discourses on the "Leaven" and "Bread of Life," St. Mark viii. 14, *et seq.*).

Continually we find discrepancies between the various narratives, occasionally manifest contradictions. At our peril we disguise this from the children. An intelligent eight-year-old will point out to us that one Gospel writer maintains that Blind Bartimeus was healed as Our Lord went out of Jericho; the other Evangelist maintains that it was as Our Lord went in. The child cannot fail to see that both Evangelists cannot be right and both may very conceivably be wrong. A thoughtful twelve-year-old trying to write a history of Easter Day will similarly challenge us with discrepancies and contradictions. If we cling to a "dictation" theory of inspiration our case is hopeless; we shall be driven to subterfuge and deception, and the children will find us and the deception out. They themselves are very honest and natural. Human fallibility is unfortunately their daily experience. They know that if their own class were to write a true account of "yesterday in our school," the accounts would vary tremendously in emphasis, detail, accuracy of remembrance—yet, although details might be even contradictory, the main happenings would appear in

all, and the variety itself would add authenticity and credibility to the reports. The standard test for us teachers, as to the credibility of any Gospel or record, must lie in the compatibility of the particular event or saying in question with our general impression of Our Lord's Personality and teaching. For example, if Our Lord is reported in any Gospel story to have acted or spoken contrary to the conception we have formed of Him as Infinite Love, then we must conclude that, as we cannot believe Him to be inconsistent with Himself, He must in this case be incompletely or even erroneously reported. If this "bad reporting" be serious, we shall not choose to concentrate our children's attention on this passage at all until we can candidly and fully discuss it.

It is often a help to a teacher in lesson preparation to get into the way of asking, with reference to the passage in question, "Where does this part of the record come from? Who was the reporter of this or that saying or deed?"

For example, let us take the ever-memorable passage, St. John xviii. 33–38, describing the vivid conversation between Pontius Pilate and his prisoner, Jesus Christ. Who heard and reported those questions and answers? No Evangelist was there—no disciple. Was it Pontius Pilate? Was it his wife? (She had been interested in the prisoner and had indeed "suffered many things in a dream because of Him." Legend tells she was an early Christian convert.) Was it the centurion? Did what he witnessed there help him to climb to his tremendous conclusion on Golgotha? If not the centurion or Pilate, from whom was the information obtained?

Such questions, whether answerable or not, set our imagination working and give fresh view-points on scenes which are only too apt to lose their impressiveness by reason of their familiarity.

Let us now consider in fuller detail the choice and treatment of stories from the Gospels, keeping in view mainly the needs of the children in our Elementary Schools, *e. g.* under the age of fourteen years. If we are at all in agreement with the estimate given above as to what constitutes the essential message of Christianity and the fundamental teaching of Christ; if we believe that what we want to help the children to become sure of is that *God is Love, revealed in Jesus Christ, and we must love like God;* then for the younger children we shall mainly make our choice of stories from among the deeds of Christ, as giving to the children concrete pictures of Love in action, expressing itself to individual people. Our little children need simple, vivid pictures of this Love, not necessarily chosen with any regard to historical sequence, but each, as a rule, complete in itself, with a "happy" ending, showing the Victory of Love already manifest.

We must needs choose the infancy stories, the Babe at Bethlehem, the Shepherds, and the Wise Men, for we can feel how the little children love them, expressing, as they do, their sympathy with human helplessness and human affection, and their joy in the awakening of strength and developing life. This early period of school life is surely no time for dogmatic and unintelligible statements of the Virgin Birth to children who probably do not know the mysteries of birth and nothing at all as yet of human paternity,

and to whom, moreover, all life is so far a miracle. Yet we have known many little children drilled wearisomely (no doubt with the best intention), to say, "God" where they would naturally have said "Jesus," and to repeat sentences they did not understand as to His parentage and birth. It is almost unbelievable, but it is still possible in some schools to hear children being coached beforehand to answer the "catch" questions which the teacher knows will inevitably be put by some authorised visitor, *e.g.* "Who was Our Lord's father?" after asking, "Who was His mother?"[1]

Attempts at formularising religious ideas before the time are bound to defeat their own ends; and a thoughtful child will express his sense of confusion. "You *said* Jesus was God," stoutly maintained a six-year-old to his teacher, "and you *said* Jesus was praying to God in that picture. Wasn't He praying to Himself?" An earnest father, known to the writer, undertook one day to explain to his boys of three and five years the mystery of the Trinity with the aid of a lighted candle and its three zones of flame. The immediate result was a deep attention and apparent acceptance, but the father, as he passed out of the nursery, overheard his speculative five-year-old maintaining, "I b'live there *are* three Gods after all."

Can we not imitate the reticence of the Evangelist, and at this stage tell the Gospel stories as they are, without summarisation or definition?

One of the early Gospel stories deserves a special

[1] "Who is Jesus?" is another regrettably frequent question addressed to infants to their entire mystification. "Jesus is Jesus," was answered on a particular occasion by a perplexed little scholar, in terms truer than he knew.

attention. In hundreds of day schools to-day the Story of the Massacre of the Holy Innocents is included amongst those to be told to the infants. Surely we would not ask our little children to concentrate upon, and to remember, a German atrocity. Why do we tell them of a Herodian atrocity?—and this, too, before they are at an age to have any solution of the problems raised in it. For even if we say God took those little babies to be happy with Him, what shall we say to a child who says (as actually did a six-year-old I knew of), " Didn't their mothers go too?"

Passing from the Infancy stories, we come to a group of three stories usually considered quite suitable for little children: the Visit of Jesus to the Temple at the age of Twelve Years, the Baptism, and the Temptation. The first of these stories should surely be postponed until the children are older. " Christ among the doctors," sought " sorrowing by His Mother," presents a perplexing and not very helpful picture to a child who has not yet as a rule begun to realise and criticise the imperfections of his own parents.

" It *was* naughty to run away from His Mummy " (the remark of a four-year-old on hearing this story from his own mother) is not in any way the result we want to attain. (In adolescence, it is scarcely possible to avoid discussing the " un-understandingness " of parents, a topic which can be safely approached with a class if the teacher aim to help the young people to view more sympathetically and treat more considerately the defects of elders, whose perfection it is hypocrisy to assume. At this time, too, the unique maturity and

vision of Our Lord can be dwelt on, earning the right to liberty and independence.)

The Baptism, Temptation, and Transfiguration of Christ are again experiences beyond the little child. If taken too soon, the first of these stories becomes a strange complex of a grown-up "Christening," which the child usually reproduces in terms which scandalise and distress the teacher.

The story of the Temptation, if told to infants or lower standards, is nearly always taken by both teachers and scholars as a literal happening of a highly dramatic character; it is possible to see not infrequently, in the cases of children whose teachers have adopted "modern methods" in combination with lessons of the old style, "free drawings" representing an extremely concrete devil with conspicuous horns and hoofs. Is it not time that we left off talking to our children about the Devil in this fashion?[1] In some schools the children are given elaborate biographies of Satan, based on isolated texts from the Bible, in defiance of all modern Biblical scholarship and criticism.

What spiritual advantage can there be in requiring our children to sing—

"There's a wicked spirit watching round you still"?

Do we not develop in them either the spirit of fear or failure to face their own responsibilities? A sturdy child may ignore, despise, or even admire this Devil! Sometimes the thought of him may drive a child to deliberate despair (as witness the example quoted at the beginning of this chapter), while often a sensitive

[1] Robinson Crusoe's classic conversation with Friday on the subject of the Devil may be brought to mind.

child will awake to a real compassion for so abused and miserable a person.

I knew of one child who for a long while doubted whether or not she might pray for the Devil, and finally decided, with great relief, on the affirmative. A Divine Love which includes all but one seems to a thoughtful mind no real love at all. It was a slum child from a neglected home in south-east London who asked his teacher, "Doesn't God love the Devil too?" To lead the child to dwell in thought upon the thought of the Devil or Hell is to torture him with problems we are totally unable to help him to solve. "If God knew the Devil was going to be wicked, why did He make him?" is only one of the many puzzles that our children daily set us.[1] Moreover, in our pulpits nowadays we grown-up people hear few, if any, sermons on such topics as those of Satan or Hell-fire; why do we consider these topics still suitable for our children? Is not this teaching, in reality, an appeal to fear? "And perfect Love casteth out fear, for fear hath torment." Should we not do well to banish at once all this *negative* teaching, and concentrate upon the *positive* realities of Christ's Conquering Spirit of Love and Light, and of His Power to help those who seek?

Resuming our main topic of the choice and treatment of Gospel stories, it is worth while noticing that some still-existing syllabuses of religious teaching pass at once, or almost at once, from the Baptism and Temptation of Our Lord to the Passover, Crucifixion and Resurrection, ignoring the fact that the

[1] "God must have made Satan," said a child. "When did Satan come?" asked another.

young child's interest must necessarily, as we have said, centre in the loving *deeds* of Christ's Ministry. If any miracle stories are included in the syllabus, they are often strangely limited in number and monotonous in choice. A teacher will do well here to be independent and adventurous, telling *many* examples of the Healing Power of Christ, and not shrinking from such less-frequently-told stories as the Man with the Withered Hand, the Woman with the Spirit of Infirmity, the Blind and Lame in the Temple, the Healing of the Nobleman's Son, the Man with the Unclean Spirit, etc.

At this stage such deeds of healing serve mainly to illustrate the Love of Christ in concrete form, and to lead the child to dwell in joy upon his own powers. He reflects upon his own God-given gift of sight as he rejoices in the blind man's recovery; he is grateful for his own strength as he sympathises with the paralysed man in his weakness, and still more with him in his returning health.

Throughout these and other miracle stories, however, we need to bear in mind the purpose of our telling: each story is to show some aspect of Love. (It is surely belief in the reality and efficacy of Love that the world needs to-day to deliver us, on the one side, from a merely unintelligent spirit of revolution grounded on force, and an apathetic and reactionary indifference on the other.)

Too often the teacher's emphasis has been merely upon the "marvellous" element in the story—the feat of walking on the water, or multiplying the loaves and fishes, or quelling the storm, forgetful of the fact that the child may easily be impressed with a sense

of wizardry and magical resources in a Person, and yet merely regard Him with fear or envy. A teacher, by such methods, may have succeeded in emphasising Christ's Love of Power rather than the Power of His Love.

It is not so much the *wonders* of Christ we want to make believable to the child as the *wonder of His Love.* The teacher will do well to notice in both the preparation and giving of a lesson where the high light should fall in the story and where the emphasis should be laid. The light falls, and the emphasis is laid, not infrequently, upon facts easy to recall by questioning, and these facts are often the least important element in the story. The writer is not attempting a caricature, but recording a fact, when calling to mind a lesson on the Feeding of the Five Thousand once heard in an Infant School, where for the first few minutes the children were engaged in counting up to five hundred, with the idea of impressing upon them the main truth of the story!

The story of the Crucifixion nearly always finds a place in the infant teacher's syllabus. I recollect one scheme of work in use over a large area where the infant teachers were directed, among other matters, to instruct even the youngest children "in the *meaning and purpose* of Our Lord's Passion and Resurrection."

Yet the story of the Crucifixion, if taken at all with such young children, requires the most careful handling. The writer has known more than one little child inconsolable at night in bed because of the dread picture of horror presented by the story; no comfort from mother could for many nights blot out the memory—in the darkness of that scene so vividly imagined by his

sensitive mind there was no place for the Resurrection hope. Again, I remember noticing on one occasion a far sadder sight: a slum child from a neglected home, unobserved as he thought by any grown-up person, was absorbed in contemplating a realistic picture of the Crucifixion, and was literally gloating over its physical details, as was evident from the expression of his face and the words he let fall.

Many of us know in the terrible games played by some children how hardening to certain natures can be the sight of human pain.

If we tell the Passion story to our little children, surely we may imitate the reticence of the Gospels, and bear in mind the Master's injunction, "Weep *not* for Me." The story must be a story of triumphant and unshaken love, told and read in the light of Easter Day; to the child to whom it is told it should never end with the thought of death, but always with the certainty of Resurrection. Often we teachers thoughtlessly carry our children back into the gloom of the first Good Friday, forgetful that Easter has made all the difference in the way in which we must view its happenings.

Proportion and emphasis make all the difference, too, in the telling of the Easter story itself. I have heard lessons in which the chief emphasis lay on Eastern burial customs, the structure of a cave tomb, the disposal of the grave-clothes, etc. The net effect was to leave the children, like Mary, "seeking the living among the dead." The teacher was concentrating on the physical side of death, rather than lifting the wings of thought to the joy of a life beyond the grave.

The whole question of death, indeed, needs reconsideration and more careful treatment. Some of us used to say, "Keep death away altogether from the little child," and to a great extent we would say that still. But the war has brought death close to nearly all of us; scarcely a home to-day is unshadowed; even a child in the infant school knows the "Roll of Honour," and what it stands for. Moreover the housing conditions of most of the children in our land force upon them almost exclusively the physical side of death. They often see the last stages of illness; they are shown the body and the coffin—"the box," as they familiarly call it—funerals are for them a solemn festivity, marred only by the dread attraction they feel for the central horror.

A little four-year-old, in a big Elementary School class, grasped at my skirt one day as I passed down the gangway: "Teacher," she whispered, "they've put my Granny in a hole in the ground."[1]

Truly we cannot avoid dealing with this insistent problem; we must somehow deliver our children from the fear of death. How can it be done? Each teacher must face the problem for himself. The Resurrection story will, of course, help; but we want more than this.

The children must, from the beginning, be led *to think of death with Christ's thought of it.* "If ye loved Me ye would rejoice. I go to the Father. In My Father's House are many mansions. Lo! I am with you all the days."

[1] Another young child said to his mother one day, "Mummy, why did they send us down and then dead us? What is the good of it?"

To the little child death comes very naturally as full of beauty and comfort, *if* we lead him from the physical side to the spiritual reality. One mother that I know of delivered her little child from the fear of death in the following way. She found herself met by the child's question, "Mother, is it true when we die they put us in a hole in the ground?" and, taking the child upstairs into the bedroom, she opened a long drawer. "Do you see that old velveteen dress of yours? It was too worn-out and too small for you, so we put it away in that drawer. We didn't put *you* away. You had a new dress." Then she talked to her about the poor, worn-out, tired bodies, weary of pain, that are put in the ground, "but not *we*—we are alive for evermore."

Sometimes a tiny child helped on these lines will work out very beautiful ideas for himself. A boy just under four years had been much attached to his grandmother, who died while away from the house where he lived. He was told of her death, but nothing more; no one mentioned the matter again, thinking it had passed from his thoughts. For three weeks after the funeral he never referred to her; he then said suddenly to his mother, "I expect Granny is *quite* better now; Lord Jesus has made her better." The idea that sometimes people get better here and sometimes they must pass first of all through the Gate of Death to get better on the other side, often brings comfort to a child perplexed as to why his prayer for some one's recovery has not apparently been answered.

We surely need to be able to speak more freely and naturally and joyfully about death, discussing it with

our children long before the time of loss comes, when such discussion cannot be undertaken without arousing such poignant emotion as necessarily centres round a near and overwhelming event. During the war it fell to the present writer on occasion to go with a young married woman to the neighbouring Arsenal for the purpose of identifying the body of her husband killed in an explosion. She had been taught " religion " in Day and Sunday School and continued to send her children there. " It keeps them out of the street," and " It's good for them," she said. But in her own mind no sign of " Resurrection " hope persisted; she seemed deaf to all attempted suggestions of comfort in the thought of life persisting through death, of a soul no longer inhabiting that shattered body—coming back again and again to her deep desire for the unrecognisable remains: " If they'd only let me have 'im 'ome."

The importance of not treating such events as those of Our Lord's Resurrection and Ascension in a materialistic way by laying stress on the physical side, cannot, indeed, be too firmly fixed in mind. One wonders whether a model or drawing of an Eastern tomb is really, as so many teachers believe, a necessary adjunct to the Easter Story, and the net effect of the story of the Ascension is often to create a distance between the child and Our Lord by sending Him to a remote and physical Heaven[1] above the stars, rather than to bring to consciousness a Presence

[1] A mother known to the writer was questioned rather wistfully by her four-year-old: " Mummy, is it very far to Heaven? How will we get there? I suppose we have a big ladder and climb up." Then the haunting fear came out: " Mummy, suppose the ladder isn't long enough? "

" closer to us than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet." The Ascension message, " Lo, I am with you all the days," is indeed, in the writer's view, best brought to a very little child, *not* by direct reference to the fact of the Ascension at all, but by stories from the Acts of the Apostles, Church History, the mission field and life in the world to-day, exemplifying *the extension of the life of Christ in the lives of those who followed, and are still following Him.*

Finally the Gospel stories must naturally, at this early stage of child-life, be mainly *told* to the children, rather than read to or by them, though the Bible words can be interwoven with the narrative, or a few verses read to the class at the close.

With the children of the lower standards, eight to eleven or twelve years, we reach a different stage. They can hold a series of connected stories in their minds, and are ready for the presentation of the Gospel story in historical sequence as far as that is possible. Our aim will be to attract the children to the Personality of Our Lord. With this end in view, we must succeed in making Him *real.* Hence the importance of the Eastern background, to which we have made reference, and the careful intensive study of the Gospel stories. This is the time for the miracles in their Palestinian setting; for a certain number of the Parables, with the vivid occasions out of which they rose; for a few of the outstanding " Words " and " Sayings." Such imaginary lives of Christ as are given in Dr. Abbott's *Philochristus*, R. C. Gillie's *Story of Stories*, Forbush's *Boy's Life of Christ*, and the anonymous *Letters from an Unknown Disciple* will

be found invaluable by the teacher. The story must move imaginatively, yet not too leisurely, towards the climax of Good Friday. (It is surely not in the true interests of reverence or religious enthusiasm for the children of the upper standards to spend, as is directed by a syllabus in use in many existing schools, a period of three terms, *i. e.* one year, over "the events of Holy Week.")

With the children of the age under discussion, the writer finds it more profitable, as a rule, to tell the story first, as vividly as possible, and bring the class to the Gospel narrative itself either at the close of the lesson period or on the next day, rather than to begin by reading with or to the children the Bible words, which, by their over-familiarity or by their linguistic strangeness, may fail to arrest or detain attention. The writer carried away an unforgettable impression of dreariness and boredom from a lesson once heard in a boys' Day School on the Pharisee and the Publican, where the lesson began (and one may say also ended) with the lifeless reading round, verse by verse, of the Gospel words.

The actual method of narration must vary with the personality of the teacher and the portion of the Gospel story dealt with. Sometimes the desired impression is best produced by an uninterrupted telling of such a story as the Transfiguration, with its atmosphere of wonder and mystery. Sometimes, as in such a story as the Healing of the Leper, the tale breaks naturally into portions of narrative, alternating with pauses for free discussion.

An atmosphere of free discussion, and the arousing

of each individual scholar to think for himself, must be the guiding aim of our methods, especially with those children who are passing into their teens. At this stage, if they have been taught on lines suggested above, they should have in their minds a series of vivid and easily recalled Gospel scenes and sayings, which they are ready to turn over and study, and on which they may form theories and generalisations. If so, we may safely start with Bibles open, and encourage them to dig out fuller meanings from already familiar words.

At this stage the children may be much interested by such a task as making their own Gospel "harmony," ruling their note-books into four columns and "indexing" the Gospels for themselves, composing section and chapter headings, etc. This is the time when the Sermon on the Mount can form a fascinating syllabus for discussions on the fundamental problems of Christian conduct.[1]

Again, this is the time when, in connection with the Miracles of Healing, the children can be led to begin to think as to the possibilities of spiritual healing to-day.[2]

[1] See *Old Truths for New Times*, M. A. Wroe, National Society and S.P.C.K., 4/- net.

[2] Some time ago the writer made such an attempt with an unusually alert and thoughtful Day-School class of ten-year-olds. It was interesting to notice that the children began by being sure that pain and disease *always* "did you good" and were "according to God's will" and "came from God." On further thinking they decided "it depended on the person"—"the way the person bore the pain or disease," and then unanimously agreed that *good could* come out of the experience of pain and disease as out of war and sin, but that pain and disease did not come from God and were not good. They felt sure that God, like themselves, wanted every one to be well and happy, and brought forward many examples of Our Lord's attitude to this matter as shown in the fact that whenever He came across disease or pain He healed it if He could.

This is also the time when a further stage can be reached in the treatment of the very important and difficult question of the Gospel Parables.

To the little child the Parable will come (as it

They had evidently not noticed St. Matthew xiii. 58, and were surprised to find that sometimes even Jesus could not heal, "because of their unbelief." The children's varied suggestions as to the reason why He sent out the "mourners" at the raising of Jairus' daughter and other remarks during the lesson showed that they were beginning to realise that the block to the accomplishment of God's will in His gift of health lay in people's minds—"in what they were thinking," as one of the children put it.

Pursuing our inquiry as to what *prevents* God now giving His gift of health to all, the children brought forth as causes of disease and illness not only "doing wrong things with our bodies" and not knowing or using God's gifts of fresh air, water, rest, etc., but also *wrong thoughts*. "Worry makes you ill," asserted one child. "You can get a headache with a bad temper," said another.

All had heard of the daily newspapers' warning that very morning that *fear* was a predisposing cause of "Flu." Finally we tried to pass from the thought of what *hinders* to what may *help* the coming of God's gift of health. The children were eager to describe the treatment for a bruise, a cut, a burn, a broken leg, and agreed that though we use remedies up to a certain point, we then must leave the cut or bruise or broken leg to "get well of itself." We stopped some minutes examining old scars on our hands and thinking of that wonderful inner power of Life which rises up in us to heal a cut finger just as it heals up the torn branch of a great forest tree. "It is God," said a child.

Most of the class thought you were most likely to get well quickly, even if you used doctor's remedies, if you trusted in God's gift of inner life and healing and believed that through the remedies God was going to do you good. Also you must, they thought, put away wrong thoughts like bad temper, worry, fear, etc., and think "those things that be true, pure, lovely and of good report." Some thought the best thing at the beginning of a cold was "to forget all about it."

We ended with recalling the Scout's practice of breathing in each morning and saying "Thank you" as a prayer at the same time, and we thought over some other ways of "keeping oneself well." They were evidently interested in the idea that just as once flying in the air seemed an absurd dream to most men on the earth, and now, after a series of isolated individual efforts, men have found out how to fly; so it may be that by our individual experiments and discoveries as to our own powers of laying hold on God's gift of life and healing, we may be bringing in the time when disease and illness shall be done away and "the Kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven."

did to the Hebrew children of long ago) *merely as a beautiful story*—as some concrete picture of Love, associated with the thought of the Great Story-teller; to him the story of the Lost Sheep brings the love of a shepherd, the helplessness of a strayed lamb, and the image of the Loving Lord and His wonderful stories. To the older child, *e. g.* in our lower standards, some attempt can be made to give the Parable in its *original setting*, as arising out of some real situation in the earthly life of Jesus. The child thus begins to see the Parable's inner meaning as applied *first of all to other people*, e. g. to the Scribes and Pharisees, the Publicans and Sinners, to whom the story was originally told. We often see a truth when applied to the case of other people before we realise it as applicable to our own. (Two quarrelling children in a nursery were once disputing over a perambulator. The situation ended with the triumphant withdrawal of the younger child carrying the perambulator, and saying over her shoulder to the elder one: "God will be very pleased with you for this, M——.") At a later stage—in most cases *after* the age of twelve or thereabouts—the children can begin to see the Parable *as applied to themselves*, and consider its inner meaning and message to those grappling with the spiritual difficulties of to-day. A teacher who refrains from much direct moral teaching or direct questioning, who keeps his own interpretation of the Parable's message at first somewhat in the background, and is ready to apply the Parable honestly to his own case as well as to the children's, is more likely than another to lead the children to make independent efforts at interpretation,

to win their unashamed confidence, and not to infringe that precious "reserve" of the soul which is surely the essential safeguard of all true religious feeling.

SUGGESTED BOOKS ON SOME TOPICS TREATED IN THIS CHAPTER

(On Psychical Experience and the Sub-conscious Mind.)

Varieties of Religious Experience: William James. (Longmans), 15/- net.

Human Personality: (2 vols.) F. W. Myers. (Longmans), £2 12*s.* 6*d.* net.

Transactions of the Psychical Research Society. See also works of Freud, Jung, Dr. Constance Long, etc.

(On above Topics and on Mental and Spiritual Healing.)

Law of Psychic Phenomena: Hudson. (Putnams' Sons), 7/6 net.

Christus Futurus: By Author of *Pro Christo et Ecclesia.* (Macmillan.) Out of print.

The Unconscious Mind: Schofield. (Hodder and Stoughton). Out of print.

Science and Health: Mary Baker Eddy. (Christian Science Publishing Society), 17/- net.

Spiritual Healing: Dr. W. F. Cobb. (G. Bell), 6/-.

The Psychology of Insanity: Hart. (Camb. Univ. Press), 2/6 net.

Shell Shock: Elliot and Pears. (Longmans), 1/6 net.

Tracts published by the "Guild of Health."

Lead Thou, by John Mahler, is an individual's authentic account of his own spiritual pilgrimage, and the experiences which befell him on the way. (Blackwell), 3/- net.

Essay by J. A. Hadfield, M.B., on "Mind and Brain," in *Immortality.* (Macmillan), 10/6 net; also essay in *The Spirit.* (Macmillan), 10/6 net.

This One Thing I Know: by E. M. S. (J. M. Watkins), 3/6 net. (A detailed account of a case of spiritual healing from "the other side.")

CHAPTER II

OLD TESTAMENT STORIES IN THE LIGHT OF HIGHER CRITICISM [1]

We will now proceed to consider the choice and treatment of Old Testament stories. It is indeed these stories, rather than those from the Gospels, that usually present most difficulty to the teacher and occasion questioning and uncertainty, although, as a matter of fact, the problems of the New Testament are more fundamental, for they consist mainly in the difficulty of applying the Christian ethic to individual and social conduct. (Some attempt is made to face this difficulty in Chapter V, "The Christian Method in Education.") Undeniably, the problems of the Old Testament are more frequently discussed, for nearly every one has been confronted at some time or another by such questions as: Was the world made in a week? Did Balaam's ass really speak and the hand on the dial of Ahaz really move? Did the whale really swallow Jonah? Who was Cain's wife?

To-day an increasing number of teachers are prepared to accept without challenge the modern view of inspiration as applied to the Books of the Old Testament; nevertheless, there are still many in the Elementary Schools of town and country who continue to give

[1] As to the meaning of the term "Higher," see note on p. 20.

their daily " religious lessons " in terms unmodified by this view, and an even larger number who do not realise all that is involved in practice by its acceptance.

It is worth while, therefore, to consider our position once again, even if it involves some repetition of familiar truths.

For we teachers of the present day hold a view of the Old Testament entirely different from that of the teachers of a generation ago, and we hold this view as a result of the labour of a countless army of workers. It stirs the imagination to think of those who have given their lives to the study of Eastern languages, the construction of grammars, dictionaries and texts, who have spent years in poring over cross-written manuscripts, and deciphering parchments and papyri, who have dug in the hot sand of Egyptian tombs and unearthed the clay tablet libraries of Assyria.[1]

[1] The decipherment of the cuneiform or wedge-shaped inscriptions of Assyria has been one of the most marvellous achievements of the present century.

'Travellers had discovered inscriptions engraved in cuneiform, or, as they were also termed, arrow-headed, characters on the ruined monuments of Persepolis and on other sites in Persia. The inscriptions were in three different systems of cuneiform writing; and, since the three kinds of inscription were always placed side by side, it was evident that they represent different versions of the same text. . . .

" It was further plain that the inscriptions had to be read from left to right, since the ends of all the lines were exactly underneath one another on the left side, whereas they terminated irregularly on the right; indeed, the last line sometimes ended at a considerable distance from the right-hand extremity of the inscription. . . .

" The clue to the decipherment of the inscriptions was first discovered by the successful guess of a German scholar, Grotefend. Grotefend noticed that the inscriptions generally began with three or four words, one of which varied, while the others remained unchanged. The variable word had three forms, though the same form always appeared on the same monument. Grotefend, therefore, conjectured that this word represented the name of a king,

"Archæology has made a series of most valuable additions to our knowledge, sometimes supporting, sometimes correcting, sometimes supplementing the Biblical date. What, for instance, can be more stimulating and welcome to the student than the Moabitish king's own detailed account of an event discussed in a single verse in the Kings?[1] Or the Assyrian king's own narrative of the entire campaign

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the words which followed it being the royal titles. One of the supposed names appeared much oftener than the others, and as it was too short for Artaxerxes and too long for Cyrus, it was evident that it must stand either for Darius or for Xerxes. A study of the classical authors showed Grotefend that certain of the monuments on which it was found had been constructed by Darius, and he accordingly gave to the characters composing it the values required for spelling "Darius" in its old Persian form. In this way he succeeded in obtaining conjectural values for six cuneiform letters. He now turned to the royal name, which also appeared on several monuments, and was of much the same length as that of Darius. This could only be Xerxes; but if so the fifth letter composing it (r) would necessarily be the same as the third letter in the name of Darius. This proved to be the case, and thus afforded the best possible evidence that the German scholar was on the right track. The third name, which was much longer than the other two, differed from the second chiefly at the beginning, the latter part of it resembling the name of Xerxes. Clearly, therefore, it could be nothing else than Artaxerxes, and that it actually was so, was rendered certain by the fact that the second character composing it was that which had the value of r.

"Grotefend now possessed a small alphabet, and with this he proceeded to read the word which always followed the royal name, and therefore probably meant 'king.' He found that it closely resembled the word which signified 'king' in Zend, the old language of the Eastern Persians, which was spoken in one part of Persia at the same time that Old Persian, the language of the Achæmenian princes, was spoken in another. There could consequently be no further room for doubt that he had really solved the great problem, and discovered the key to the decipherment of the cuniform texts."—Sayce, *Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments.*

[1] *Cf.* 2 Kings iii. 5. "But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the King of Moab rebelled against the King of Israel," *et seq.*, with the inscription from the Moabite Stone found in 1869 by Dr. Klein, across which are written thirty-four lines in the Phœnician alphabet—

in which the Rabshakeh's mission to Jerusalem forms, as we now understand, a single episode? [1] Or the particulars, recounted by a contemporary, if not by

" I, Mesha, am the son of Chemosh-Gad, King of Moab . . . I reigned after my father. And I erected this stone to Chemosh . . . a stone of salvation, for He saved me from all despoilers, and made me see my desire upon all my enemies, even upon Omri, King of Israel. Now they afflicted Moab many days, for Chemosh was angry with his land. . . . In my days (Chemosh) said : ' (Let us go) and I will see my desire . . . I will destroy Israel with an everlasting destruction' . . ." etc.—Sayce, *Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments.*

[1] See the history told in Sennacherib's own words. "' Zedekiah, king of Ashkelon,' he says, ' who had not submitted to my yoke, himself, the gods of the house of his fathers, his wife, his sons, his daughters and his brothers, the seed of the house of his fathers, I removed, and I sent him to Assyria. I set over the men of Ashkelon, Sarludari, the son of Rukipti, their former king, and I imposed upon him the payment of tribute and the homage due to my majesty, and he became a vassal. In the course of my campaign I approached and captured Beth-Dagon, Joppa, Beneberak and Azur, the cities of Zedekiah, which did not submit at once to my yoke, and I carried away their spoil. . . .

" ' But as for Hezekiah of Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke, forty-six of his strong cities, together with innumerable fortresses and small towns which depended on them, by overthrowing the walls and open attack, by battle, engines and battering-rams I besieged, I captured. I brought out from the midst of them and counted as a spoil 200,150 persons, great and small, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen and sheep without number. Hezekiah himself I shut up like a bird in a cage in Jerusalem, his royal city. I built a line of forts against him, and I kept back his heel from going forth out of the great gate of his city. I cut off his cities which I had spoiled from the midst of his land, and gave them to Metinti, King of Ashdod, Padi, King of Ekron, and Zil-baal, King of Gaza, and I made his country small. In addition to their former tribute and yearly gifts I added other tribute, and the homage due to my majesty, and I laid it upon them. The fear of the greatness of my majesty overwhelmed him, even Hezekiah, and he sent after me to Nineveh, my royal city, by way of gift and tribute, the Arabs and his bodyguard whom he had brought for the defence of Jerusalem, his royal city, and had furnished with pay, along with thirty talents of gold, 800 talents of pure silver, carbuncles and other precious stones, a couch of ivory, thrones of ivory, an elephant's hide, an elephant's tusk, rare woods, whatever their names, a vast treasure, as well as the eunuchs of his palace, dancing men and dancing women; and he sent his ambassador to offer homage.' "—Sayce, *Fresh light from the Ancient Monuments.*

an eye-witness, of Cyrus' conquest of Babylon?"[1]—Driver, *The Higher Criticism.*

We owe more than we realise to those who have discovered for us a "Greater Bible," a whole realm of parallel literature existing among nations outside the Hebrews, and throwing valuable light upon the contents of the Old Testament itself.[2] We can now fill up that important gap of four hundred years between the last page of the Old Testament and the first page of the New.[3] (See opposite page.)

[1] "Merodach" (an Assyrian god) "went about to all men, wherever were their seats. . . .

"And he appointed a king to guide aright in the heart what his hand upholds; Cyrus, King of Elam, he proclaimed by name for the sovereignty; all men everywhere commemorate his name. . . .

"Merodach, the great lord, the restorer of his people, beheld with joy the deeds of his viceregent, who was righteous in hand and heart. To his city of Babylon he summoned his march, and he made him take the road to Babylon; like a friend and a comrade, he went at his side. Without fighting or battle he caused him to enter into Babylon" . . . etc.—Sayce, *Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments.*

[2] "The monuments of Egypt and Babylon combine to establish the presence of man upon the earth, and the existence of entirely distinct languages at periods considerably more ancient than is allowed for by the figures in the book of Genesis, and the Tablets brought from the Library of Asshurbanipal have disclosed to us the source of the material elements upon which the Biblical narrative of the Creation and the Deluge have been constructed."—Driver, *The Higher Criticism*, 1905.

Cf. the Story of Creation from a clay tablet in above library.

"At that time the heavens above named not a name. Nor did the earth below record one. Yea, the deep was their first creator, . . . The flood of the sea was she who bore them all. Their waters were embosomed in one place, and the flowering reed was ungathered, the marsh plant was ungrown. At that time the gods had not issued forth, any one of them. By no name were they recorded, no destiny (had they fixed). Then the (great) gods were made, Lakhmu and Lakhamu issued forth (the first). They grew up. . . . Next were made the host of heaven and earth. The time was long (and then) the gods Anu (Bel and Ea were born of) the host of Heaven and earth. . . . the Creator made beautiful the stations of the great gods. . . .

"At that time . . . the gods in their assembly created (the living creatures). They made beautiful the mighty (animals). They made the living things come forth, the cattle of the field, the beast of the field, and the creeping thing."—Sayce, *Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments.*

[3] The following table may suggest in rough outline the happenings of this period; much difference of opinion exists as to the dates and periods to be assigned—

	Outside Events.	*Date.*	*Events in Jewish History.*	*Jewish Literature.*
		B.C.		
4th cent. B.C.	Alexander's Generals, Ptolemy and descendants and Seleucus and descendants rule over Egyptian and Asiatic possessions respectively.	320	Palestine taken by Ptolemy.	?Zechariah. Book of Jonah.
3rd cent. B.C.		300	Palestine becomes Hellenised.	
				Greek translation of Pentateuch.
		260		Prophetic Canon closed.
	Antiochus the Great. (Seleucid Dynasty.)	223		Books of Chronicles.
		220	Palestine overrun by Antiochus the Great, 218.	Ezra and Nehemiah assume present form. Book of Proverbs completed.
2nd cent. B.C.		200	Palestine taken by Antiochus, 198.	Ecclesiastes. ? Song of Songs.
		180	Heliodorus attempts robbery of Temple.	Ecclesiasticus.
	Reign of Antiochus Epiphanes.	175	Massacre of Jews by Antiochus, 170. Maccabean Rising, 167. Death of Judas Maccabees, 159.	Book of Enoch, Pt. I. ? Book of Daniel.
	Syria recognises independence of Judah. Rome recognises independence of Jews.	140	Recognition of Judah's independence. Maccabean Commonwealth under Simon, 141.	Compilation of Book of Enoch, Part II.
		120	Aristobulus, "King of the Jews," 104.	Book of Enoch, Part III.
1st cent. B.C.	Syria a Roman Province.	64		Wisdom and Psalms of Solomon.
		63	Pompey takes Jerusalem. Antipater, Governor of Judah.	
	Murder of Julius Cæsar.	44		
		37	Herod takes Jerusalem.	Book of Maccabees and Esdras.
	Egypt a Roman Province. Augustus supreme.	27		
		4	Death of Herod.	
		A.D.		
		30	Crucifixion.	Pauline Epistles. Synoptic Gospels and Acts.
		70	Destruction of Jerusalem.	Revelation. Fourth Gospel. Remaining Epistles.

Within broad limits we can now place the books of the Old Testament in order of date, and realise something as to the gradual making up of the Old Testament Canon.[1]

We discover that this "Word of God" comes to us in many tongues, in books written at many periods of a nation's history[2] by many and very different writers.

The stories of Daniel, to most of us, will gain in meaning when we realise them as allegories written to comfort the Israelites during the grinding tyranny of Antiochus Epiphanes. The Prophets will come near to us as we learn that their writings are probably contemporaneous with the events of which they tell, while the book of Chronicles was probably written after the Exile, and Judges, Samuel and Kings, in their

[1] "The historical books are now seen to be not, as was once supposed, the works of Moses or Joshua or Samuel. They are seen to present a multiplicity of phenomena which cannot be accounted for or reasonably explained, except upon the supposition that they came into existence gradually; that they are compiled out of the writings of distinct and independent authors, characterised by different styles and representing different points of view, which were combined together and otherwise adjusted, till they finally assumed their present form."—Driver, *The Higher Criticism.*

"The so-called Higher or Literary Criticism has investigated the origin of the various books, and pronounced that some books once supposed to have been written by single writers are compilations with a long and complicated literary history, and some books cannot have been written by the authors whose names they bear. Sometimes it goes further, and asserts that some books have been revised and interpolated in such a way that their original authors would hardly be able to recognise them. Historical criticism affirms that much of the history has been coloured by the beliefs and practices of the times in which the books were compiled, long after the events, and must be regarded as rather an ideal than an actual picture of the national life. It bids us to a great extent revolutionise our views of the course of the history of Israel."—Kirkpatrick, *The Higher Criticism.*

[2] The following table gives roughly the relation of the *Prophets*

present form, five hundred years at least after the events of which they relate.[1]

Indeed, apart from the results of modern scholarship altogether, an intelligent child has sometimes pointed out to us that Moses could not have written of his own death, that two different and contradictory stories of the Creation are given side by side in Genesis i. and ii., that two different and contradictory stories of Noah's Ark are interwoven into one in Genesis vi. and vii., that two different and contradictory stories are given

and some of the various *books of the Bible* to the periods of which they tell. Scholars differ very widely in the dates they assign—

Century B.C.	*Characters and Events in Hebrew History.*	*Hebrew Literature.*
11	Saul, David, *Samuel.*	National song-books compiled (*e. g.* Song of Deborah and of Miriam, David's Lament).
10	Solomon.	Beginnings of state memoirs (Stories of Saul and David).
9	Omri, Ahab, Jehu, Athaliah, *Elijah, Elisha,* Jeroboam II.	
8	Hezekiah, *Isaiah.*	*Amos, Hosea, Isaiah* (i.), *Micah,* earlier parts of *Judges* and *Samuel.*
7	Josiah.	*Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Nahum.*
6	The Exile.	Exilic *Psalms, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Isaiah* (ii.), *Haggai, Zechariah.* Completion of *Kings, Judges, Samuel, Malachi, Isaiah* (iii.), etc.
	The Return.	
5	Ezra and Nehemiah.	

[1] "The poetical books are seen now, in fact, to have a much wider significance than they would have had if they had been, as largely as tradition asserts, the work of David and Solomon alone."—Driver and Kirkpatrick, *The Higher Criticism.*

of the first appearance of David at the Court of King Saul, and that in 2 Samuel xxiv. it is related that *God* moved David to number the people, while in 1 Chronicles xxi. it is stated that it was *Satan* who did so. Any attempt to regard the Old Testament as a verbally inspired single book leads the thoughtful reader, whether child or adult, to see that this book, if such, is full of self-contradictions—it denies itself.

We are, in short, when confronting the Old Testament, face to face with a heterogeneous *library* of books—prose, poetry, history and fiction, allegory and myth, law books and indices, plays and songs—written by many various authors, in many various ages, and on many various levels of spiritual development. That is the source from which the teacher has to make his choice and decide his treatment of Bible stories.

An effective passage from a lecture of Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch to the University of Cambridge on "The Art of Reading the Bible," and reported in the *Cambridge Magazine*, May 11, 1918,[1] may serve to emphasise this point—

"Let me, amplifying a short passage from Dr. Moulton, ask you to imagine a volume including the great books of our own literature all bound together in some such order as this: *Paradise Lost*, Darwin's *Descent of Man*, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Walter Map, Mill on Liberty, Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, *The Annual Register*, Froissart, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, *Domesday Book*, the *Morte d'Arthur*, Campbell's *Lives of the Lord Chancellors*, Boswell's *Johnson*, Barbour's *The Bruce*, Hakluyt's *Voyages*,

[1] Since published in volume form.

Clarendon, Macaulay, the Plays of Shakespeare, Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, *The Faëry Queen*, Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, Bacon's *Essays*, Swinburne's Poems and Ballads, Fitzgerald's *Omar Khayyám*, Wordsworth, Browning, *Sartor Resartus*, Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Burke's *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, Ossian, *Piers Plowman*, Burke's *Thoughts on the Present Discontents*, *Quarles*, Newman's *Apologia*, Donne's Sermons, Ruskin, Blake, *The Deserted Village*, *Manfred*, Blair's *Grave*, *The Complaint of Deor*, Bailey's *Festus*, Thompson's *Hound of Heaven*.

"Will you imagine that in this volume most of the authors' names are lost; that of the few that survive a number have found their way into wrong places; that Ruskin is credited with *Sartor Resartus;* that *Laus Veneris* and *Dolores* are ascribed to Queen Elizabeth; and that, as for the titles, they were never invented by the authors, but by a Committee? Will you still go on to imagine that all the poetry is printed as prose, while all the long paragraphs of prose are broken up into short verses, so that they resemble the little passages set out for parsing or analysis in an examination paper?

"Have we done? By no means. Having effected all this, let us sprinkle the result with italics and numerals, print it in double columns, with a marginal gutter on either side, each gutter pouring down an inky flow of references and cross-references. Then, and not till then, is the outward disguise complete—so far as you are concerned."

A heterogeneous library of books of all ages and levels of spiritual development; truly a formidable

problem for a teacher to face, especially when untrained in Biblical criticism and unacquainted with Eastern languages.

Is there no simpler method of approaching the Old Testament—no road in which even the wayfaring man may not err? After all, the first teachers in the Christian Church were unlettered fishermen.

Happily for us teachers there is such a way. *We may approach the Old Testament through the New.* We may accept Our Lord's revelation of the Nature of God and Goodness, and read the Old Testament in the light of this revelation, viewing the happenings and sayings we find in it from what we feel to be the Christian point of view, and testing them by the standard of Jesus Himself—" God, Who in times past spoke by the fathers, hath in these last days spoken by His Son." " Ye have heard that it had been said to (in R.V.) men of old time—but *I* say unto you."

So when we turn over the pages of the Old Testament in the light of Christ's subsequent revelation, we find that we are reading the story of a search—the search of man after God—we are watching man's gradual understanding of God and His purpose; we are seeing the gradual revelation of the Goodness of God through the minds and souls of those seeking Him throughout the ages. Those of us who believe that there is still a place for the Old Testament in our religious teaching, hold that it will help our children to feel the greatness of God's Love and Purpose if they can see that these were not learnt by man all at once; they will realise the wonder of the Revelation of Our Lord more fully if they see how men were

waiting and longing for it, how once they held thoughts about God we cannot hold to-day, and yet were continually casting aside their lower thought of God for a greater, continually pressing forward "in expectation" and feeling towards the Christian Revelation of Peace and Joy and Love.

The fascination of the Old Testament books lies in their manifestation of God's gradual revelation of Himself, and of man's gradual discovery of God—the development, as the centuries pass, in man's thought of Him.[1]

So varied is the Old Testament Library, so extensive is the historical period covered by it that we can trace in it this theme—the gradual growth in man's thought of God—right back to its beginnings, to the time when the Hebrew carved a graven image of his god (Judges xvii. 5, xviii. 18; 2 Kings xvii. 41), a bull (Exod. xxxii.), or a stone monolith (1 Sam. vi. 14, vii. 12; Judges viii. 27, xviii. 30; Joshua iv. 5; 2 Kings xviii. 4; Deut. xii. 1–7), carried it into battle (1 Sam. iv. 3, *et seq.*), or kept it in a tent or house (1 Sam. iii. 3, 15), or placed it on a hilltop in a grove of trees[2] (1 Sam. ix. 14, 25; Judges iii. 7; Joshua xxiv. 26; 1 Kings iii. 3, xii. 33; 2 Kings xvii. 10).

We can see how, gradually, as time passed, the Hebrews came to feel that no graven image could express their thought of God—"Make to yourself no graven image, either of the heaven above, nor of the

[1] "The lofty creed of ethical Monotheism was not flashed into the heart of the nation once for all amid the lightnings of Sinai, but won through many a struggle and many a failure." —Kirkpatrick, *The Higher Criticism.*

[2] "In a few cases, *e. g.* at Jerusalem, Israelite high places were dedicated to heathen gods; but as a rule they were used only for worship of Jehovah."—Glazebrook.

earth beneath, nor of the waters under the earth," and so, instead of the image, was substituted the empty ark, wherein dwelt the unseen Presence of God.

Yet even then, when the Hebrews had so far advanced as to cast aside any material representation of Deity, their thought of God is in strong contrast with the revelation of Christ.[1] For to the Hebrews Jehovah, the God of Israel, was as yet merely a tribal god, one among the other gods of the earth (see 1 Sam. iv. 8, v. 11, vii. 3, 4; Exod. xxiii. 32; 2 Kings xvii. 27, 38; Deut. iii. 24, iv. 7, vi. 14; Judges ii. 17, v. 8, vi. 10, x. 14, Joshua xxii. 19, 22, xxiii. 16, xxiv. 14, 15, 16, 20), albeit the most powerful and righteous; he was the God of Battles (Amos iii. 2; Deut. i. 30, 42, ii. 33, iv. 24, xx. 13), bringing victory (Ps. xviii. 39), if He were pleased, calamity (Deut. xi. 16, 17), defeat or pestilence if He were angry (Joshua x. 11; 1 Sam. vi. 19, vii. 10; Amos iii. 6; Job ii. 10; Judges i. 19, ii. 14; Deut. vii. 15). He loved the Hebrews above all the nations of the earth (Deut. iv. 7, 20; Amos iii. 2), yet even with the Hebrews Jehovah could show Himself as jealous (Joshua xxiv. 19), angry and uncertain (Judges ii. 14, 20; Joshua vii. 26; Num. xi. 33; Deut. i. 34, 37, vi. 15, vii. 4, ix. 8) and unforgiving (Deut. i. 45). He could stir up men against each other (1 Sam. xxvi. 19) and tempt them to do evil; He could order Joshua to hamstring his enemies' horses (Joshua xi. 6); He could "harden Pharaoh's heart" (Exod. xi. 10) and send a lying spirit into the hearts of the prophets of the land (1 Kings xxii. 22). He could permit Israel to steal

[1] See essay by Rev. H. A. Anson in *Concerning Prayer*. Macmillan.

what they had borrowed from the Egyptians (Exod. xi. 2, xii. 35, 36). He must not be approached directly; a priest or Levite must stand between Him and the people (Num. iii. 10; 1 Sam. vii. 8, 9). Mediators and intercessors must placate His wrath; if a man see God he dies (Exod. xix. 21, xxxiii. 20). It is God Who sends defeat and disease as punishments for sin (1 Sam. v. 6, 7); even a pitiful Hebrew leper must appear before God with an offering for his individual sin (Lev. xiv. 12, 19).

Jehovah in the Hebrews' thought was pre-eminently a God of Fear and Vengeance (2 Kings xix. 35; 1 Sam. xii. 18; Joshua iv. 24; Deut. v. 25, vii. 10, 21; Exod. xxxii. 10; Num. xiv. 12). He could strike a man dead for touching the sacred ark (2 Sam. vi. 6–10), and send Korah, Dathan and Abiram with flames into the pit (Num. xvi. 31–36).

With the Prophets we reach a far fuller apprehension of the nature of God; yet even among the loftiest utterances of the Prophets we find at times, implied or expressed, the fundamental notion of God as a God of Fear (Jer. xi. 11, 14, xliv. 6; Ezek. xxi. 3, 4, 31; Hab. iii. 12; Zeph. i. 2, 3, 14; Zech. xiv. 12; Amos iv. 9, 10, 11, v. 20, ix. 1–4; Isa. xiii. 9, li. 17, lix. 18, lxv. 12, 15, lxvi. 15, 16).

Nevertheless all the way through, beneath this strange and imperfect conception of God, we can see the Hebrew's thought was of a "Holy" God, zealous for righteousness, though training His people towards this ideal by a method of punishment and of retribution. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

All this throws up in startling contrast the concep-

tion of God as given by Jesus Christ—"the Father" Who "Himself loveth you," Who never ceases to watch and wait for his prodigal son, this "Heavenly Father" Who is "kind to the unthankful and the evil," and sends His rain and sun both to the just and the unjust; Who has no favourites, but loves equally all nations and souls; Who does not punish us in anger, but leaves us to punish ourselves; Who is ever merciful and forgiving, and Who desires us to be like Himself and learn His law—the inexorable law of Love and Mercy and Forgiveness; Who is not the God of Battles, but the God of Peace and Goodwill, and to Whom any little child or any hardened sinner may at once draw near.

It is just this contrast that convinces us of the value of the Old Testament in our religious teaching, in opposition to a number of earnest and spiritually-minded people, both in the Church of England and outside, who seem disposed to abandon the greater part of it.

For it cannot be denied that the imperfect conceptions of the nature of God and goodness which we find in the Old Testament persist into the world of to-day; our present social and national morality is largely, if not entirely, on Old Testament lines. Not often between individuals, and still less between groups or nations, do we see any recognition that the ethics of Christianity are meant to express themselves consistently in the actual conduct of life. It may help our children to wish to change this Old Testament world in which they live into the Kingdom of God "on earth as it is in Heaven," if they face out during their school

life, and in the remoter and less excited world of story, some of those conflicts as to ideals on which later on when citizens they must form their judgments.

But they cannot, of course, have this opportunity in the Bible lesson unless the teacher is prepared to deal honestly and intelligently with the Old Testament records, and to read them with honesty and courage.

For we must not fail to keep in mind another consideration in choosing and treating the stories of the Old Testament; this is our modern point of view as to what constitutes *accuracy and reliability in a historical writer.* We now expect a reputable historian to be entirely fair and impartial, free from prejudice and party feeling; we look to him, if he presents us with a translation or collection of ancient manuscripts, to be scrupulously exact in transmitting to us the original texts, with no letter knowingly altered, no word changed, with authorship and source clearly marked. If our historian gives us a monograph of his own views on a special point or period, we expect that the previous inspection of original manuscripts and sources shall have been real and thorough, and that, *e. g.* with contrary stories of the same event, he shall have weighed the evidential values of the conflicting stories with care, and given us a final third story, based on his own considered judgment as to the likely facts—all this we expect to be given to us without emotion, or bias, or partisanship, on his part, his only care being to recover as far as possible the real *truth of fact.*

This view of what constitutes truth in history is entirely different from that of the old Jewish writers.

The Hebrew historian, when he came across two rival and manifestly contradictory versions of the same event, would at times weave the two accounts together, without any attempt to modify or harmonise the discrepancies; at other times he would faithfully transcribe the two accounts, placing them side by side, and leaving the reader to judge for himself; at other times he would select what suited his didactic purpose, modifying facts or making omissions as suited the moral he wanted to convey.

Hence the heterogeneity of this Old Testament Library, the tangled and confused mass of parable and fact, legend and history, prose and poetry, through which the perplexed teacher is to make his way.

Hence, too, the vital importance of not allowing either ourselves or the children to use unthinkingly and vaguely the term " Bible."

Frequently we use it as unthinkingly and vaguely as the term " newspaper "! We attest the authority of some statement we have made by saying we saw it " in the newspaper." Our friends, if they are wise, will probe us further. Before giving credence to our assertion (for example, a prophesied fall in the price of coal) they will require to know in *what* newspaper we saw it, and *whereabouts* in the newspaper in question. Was it under some official heading emanating from the Coal Controller or the local fuel office? Was it to be found in the usual " leader," or under the column headed " Notes by the Way," or " From our London Reporter "? Was it in the reminiscence of some political speech briefly reported, or a stray sentence from a letter in the " Correspondence " column?

Our friends will wisely reserve their acceptance of our "newspaper" utterance until they know whether it represents the views of a reliable official, a local orator, a paid journalist, or of some earnest, though not necessarily well-informed, correspondent or reader. It is not even uncommon for a newspaper to contradict itself in the same issue, so varied and heterogeneous are its sources of information. Something of this kind is not impossible even in regard to the Bible. If we quote vaguely from "the Bible," we may be giving ourselves and our children quite false ideas as to the truth and authority of the statement quoted. If we are not careful, we may be quoting as history what is really parable, as morality what is really an example of the opposite.

Again, as we have before suggested, in reading the literature of the Old Testament, we teachers are bound to read its stories in the light of the scientific age in which we live, and to bring them into relation to our modern view of Nature's laws. To insist on the literal accuracy of such a story as Noah's Ark, the Tower of Babel, the dial of Ahaz, or the first chapter of Genesis, is to put in jeopardy many an honest faith, and place a stumbling-block in the road to truth; but if we put aside any such contention as to the literalness of these or similar stories, we have not thereby finished with them unless we have seen in them an expression of man's wonder at the universe in which he finds himself—of his desire for knowledge of its laws—a wonder and a desire that men of old time share in common with the scientific men of our day. It is easy, and for most thoughtful teachers necessary, to

give up any belief in the verbal accuracy of such stories as the Widow's Cruse, Elisha's Axe and, possibly, the whole cycle of miracles associated with the names of Elijah and Elisha, but it is just as necessary not to yield to the temptation to cast aside the stories altogether, until we have remembered that the very existence of such a cycle attests the fact that once upon a time there lived a personality whose mark upon his generation was such that fathers told their children of him, and they their children, and they theirs; a personality who, by his acts and deeds, impressed his fellow-men with a sense of unusual power, insight, wisdom, greatness, benevolence—with a power so unique and so mysterious that men were fain to call that Power the very Power of God, and to express their belief in myth and legend—monuments so enduring that they live unto this day.

Some Old Testament miracles, again, may have their origin in man's wonder at the beauty and order of the world as some in his wonder at the greatness of human nature itself; others, again, may find their beginning in some "natural occurrence." Eastern travellers tell us of a low bush growing in the Sinai peninsula and exuding at times a sweet gum, which may have supplied "the Manna in the Wilderness"; a strong East wind, they also tell us, may (at certain seasons) drive back the water at the northern end of the Red Sea and expose large areas of the sea's bottom, thus possibly explaining "the Crossing of the Red Sea." To the ancient Hebrew writer the thing was "a miracle," "a mystery," "a wonder," "the working of laws hitherto not understood"; the modern student,

led further on the road of Truth, may know "how it is done," and not call it a "miracle" at all, but, if he be wise, he will recognise in the happening no less mystery and wonder, and trace it ultimately always to God. Man is continually trying to understand and explain to others the world in which he finds himself, and he can only explain the world in terms of his own already attained experience and spiritual development.

Uzzah, conducting the sacred ark on a bullock cart from the field of battle, perceived the oxen to stumble, put forth his hand to steady the ark and fell dead. "Struck by the hand of an angry God," explains the old Hebrew writer in terms that revolt a Christian-tempered mind (2 Sam. vi. 7). To-day we might admit quite easily the truth of each recorded fact in the story, but if the event occurred, say, in Central Africa, every thoughtful missionary would give a different explanation. "Nervous shock," some would say, "consequent upon Uzzah's sudden realisation that he had broken one of the *taboos* of his tribe." Others would suggest "heart failure, curiously coincident in time with an averted accident." Others, again, would offer a different explanation; but we are surely safe in assuming that none of the given explanations would coincide with the view taken by the Old Hebrew writer. It need not alarm a timid mind that such is the case. If the Spirit is to lead us "into all truth," if there be a "light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," if there be any truth in the promise, "Greater works than these shall ye do because I go unto the Father," if the Incarnation of Christ has made, as many of us believe, all the differ-

ence, then it would be extraordinary if we saw no spiritual advance in men's vision as the years pass on.

Let us now consider in detail the practical question of how to choose stories from the Old Testament to tell or read to the children of our school classes.

Many still-existing syllabuses of religious instruction (passing out of use, we are glad to note, day by day) were drawn up some thirty or forty years ago, and were apparently based upon that theory of Inspiration which held the Old Testament to be one verbally inspired homogeneous whole, a single dictated utterance moving upon one uniform plane of spiritual attainment. Thus the selection of stories for a Day-School syllabus was a comparatively simple matter. The books of the Old Testament need only to be spread out in order and the children's classes also to be spread out—the four-year-olds, five-year-olds, sixes, and so on. Then the various books are allotted to the various ages of children: Creation, Fall and Flood to the four-year-olds, the rest of the book of Genesis to the elder infants, Exodus to Standard II, and so on.

Consequently, for nearly a generation the teachers in the Infant School have had to grapple with the most difficult of the Old Testament stories (we know of one syllabus, still not out of print, where the story of Melchizedek falls to the four-year-olds); the Sacrifice of Isaac has perplexed the six-year-olds; Korah, Dathan and Abiram have alarmed the lower standards, and Joshua and Judges have been the staple food of the Old Testament lessons during the impressionable years of pre-adolescent life.[1]

[1] One class (Standard VII), in a town school was allotted only Ezra and Nehemiah as O.T. material for the year.

Let us consider the case of the infants. Do such stories as we have instanced above pass the test of what constitutes really religious teaching? Do they show to the children the victorious power of the Love of God and attract them to His service? In the story of the Sacrifice of Isaac, even if a little child can be brought to see the fineness of Abraham in desiring to give his *best* to God, that child's Christian heart happily cannot conceive how any father who *really* loved his boy could possibly imagine putting him to death, and the thought of the loving Heavenly Father as suggesting the idea is as unthinkable.

"Did Isaac's mother *know* what was going to happen to him?" questioned an eight-year-old, adding, "I am sure she would never have let him go if she knew what his father was going to do."

In the case of the story of Achan (which we remember to have seen in more than one infants' syllabus associated with the Eighth Commandment as a kind of "awful example"), even if we can bring ourselves to believe (and to lead the children to think) that death by stoning is a suitable punishment for a case of military looting, yet what does our compassion say to the punishment of Achan's wife and family? If there be a place for the story of Achan in the religious instruction syllabus at all, it is surely with Standard VII, when we are discussing the ethics of punishment, prison reform, the Borstal system and the Little Commonwealth—all in connection with lessons on the Sermon on the Mount!

The story of Noah's Ark is full of difficulties when taken with children of so young an age, that is, if they are interested enough to give it real thought. A father

known to the writer found himself one Sunday afternoon confronted with his four-year-old boy and a Bible story-book showing a picture of Noah's Ark "floating," as he said, "somewhat arrogantly upon the waters." Drowning people were trying to climb in for safety, and a dead sheep floated by in the foreground. The four-year-old's pity was soon aroused.

"Why are those people drowning, Daddy?"

The father found himself somewhat haltingly explaining that the people were "naughty," "wicked"; they could have been in the Ark, but they had chosen to be "wicked" instead. The child's fat forefinger at once came down on the drowned sheep—

"Sheep wicked too, Daddy?"

"How cruel of God!" commented the child who heard of the Crossing of the Red Sea, and mourned for the death of the horses—even of Pharaoh's horses.

"It is naughty to call God cruel," warned the teacher, unconscious that she was stifling the very Christian spirit of mercy and compassion that she wished to cultivate in the child, and ignoring that child's encouraging protest against the unchristian idea of God given him by the teacher's story.

Many of these Old Testament stories do serious harm to our children, because they are told in the wrong way or at the wrong time, or are told for no better reason than that they are "in the Bible." Some of us can remember the handbook of our childhood, *Line upon Line*, and can recollect that one of our favourite stories (accompanied by an impressive illustration) was the story of Elisha and the Bears. What possible spiritual lesson could any little child learn

from such a story? We need to test very carefully every Bible story we tell to our children. Will it help them to believe in a God of Infinite Love and to want to be like Him? If not, we have no use for that story.

In choosing Old Testament stories for the infants, we must, then, select concrete pictures of Love—the Love and Care of God felt by those who trust in Him: "All things work together for good to them that love God." "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." "Your Heavenly Father knoweth——"

Thus we shall want to find a place for such stories as Elijah and the Ravens, Daniel in the Lions' Den, the Three Children in the Furnace, the Widow's Cruse, the Cloud of Rain, the Manna in the Wilderness, Jacob's Dream, etc.

They will be told as beautiful Wonder Tales before the child wants to question their literal truth; but they must be told so that the unassailable spiritual truth emerges triumphantly. Sometimes the story of Daniel in the Lions' Den is told so that the children's attention is focussed upon the "menagerie," the awfulness of the lions, or the fate of those who were eaten up "or ever they came to the bottom of the den." The writer remembers one little child for whom the story was turned into a memory of horror because the teacher ended with the account of the punishment of the informers. Again, a lesson once heard is still painfully vivid, in which the teacher described with great dramatic power how "the lions *growled*, and they came *nearer and nearer*." The usefulness of

the story surely lies in the fact that we have here a picture of a man who was so brave and full of the consciousness of God's Love that whatever happened he could go on praying; who was so secure in this consciousness of the Love of God that he was free from all fear, and free also from all desire to harm, and so the lions did not touch him—an experience which probably befell St. Francis of Assisi, and could doubtless befall any one in a similar state of mind to-day.[1]

Further, in our choice of Old Testament stories, we want to show our children pictures of the Love of Man: "He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, Whom he hath not seen?"

Thus we shall include such stories as the stories of David—David caring for his sheep; soothing Saul with his music; loving his friend; forgiving his enemy. Throughout, our aim will be to make the children feel what love is—

"Hath been, indeed, and is,"

so that they may be drawn into it and its Source, and sun themselves in its Joy and Peace.

Turning our attention now to the older children, *e. g.* those over 7 or 8 years, we must remind ourselves that life is not so simple for them; they have begun to criticise, to ask "why" and "when," and to challenge us with the question, "Is it true?" These boys and girls can keep a whole cycle of stories in their heads and follow the life and adventure of a hero.

We may believe that the children will measure more truly the stature of Jesus Christ if they can see His

[1] See *Life of Sunda Singh*, C.M.S., "The Apostle of the bleeding feet."

Personality contrasted with others; that they will feel the wonder of the Revelation of God's Love in Christ if they can see how, throughout the ages, men were longing and waiting for this Love, trying to show it in their own lives, trying to find it in God.

Thus we must lead our children to discover the heroes of the Old Testament, and yet be on our guard not to make these less real or helpful by pretending that they were perfect, or by trying to "whitewash" their deficiencies. We can freely admit that these heroes were at times (and even very often) blood-thirsty, fierce, revengeful, uncertain—that they had strange thoughts of God which we cannot hold to-day, yet they had in them the brand of *Hero*, for all were seekers after God, and some could, at times, rise near the very vision of Christ Himself.

We want the children to feel them a band of brave seekers, groping ever nearer and nearer to the light—the light that we can, if we will, walk by, because of the Coming of Christ. A child taught on old lines remarked one day to his mother *à propos* of these Old Testament stories, "God *has* improved since then, hasn't He, Mother?" We want our children to feel that God has always been the same; *man* has, indeed, "improved" since then, but he has yet a good long way to go.

Hence, it is most important to face honestly with the children the fact that the heroes of Israel were men of heroic cast, and yet not without very serious human imperfections. They were real messengers of God, speaking "the Word of the Lord"; yet they were neither perfect hearers nor perfect tellers of the Word.

When the children read with us in the Old Testament that a man rose up and said, " The Lord said unto me," " The Lord commanded " this or that; we teachers and children must put the further questions, " How far did that man *hear* the Lord's word? " " How far did he *tell* what he heard aright? " For example, we shall not find it difficult to hold the eager attention of our children to the gripping narrative of Elijah on Mount Carmel contending so courageously and faithfully with the Prophets of Baal; but when, at the end of the day, Elijah went down to the river-side and with his own hands slew the prophets of Baal with the sword (an act no modern missionary would contemplate, even in thought, towards the people he wanted to convert), we shall surely want the children to feel that though Elijah was right in his fearless witness to the truth, yet he was savage and unchristian in that method of expressing it.

It is, indeed, the *ethical* difficulties of the Old Testament stories rather than the *historical* ones which are most likely to trouble the children we are trying to teach. With both kinds of difficulties we must be entirely sincere and honest.

We shall find ourselves saying, with regard to the *historical* difficulties, " So far as we can tell, it happened like this." " The story tells us this or that, but it is difficult to be quite clear as to what exactly happened." When a child puts the question, " Was it true? " or " Did it really happen? " we may find it best to answer this question by " What do *you* think? " or " *Who* said that it was true? " " Who told the story? "

With regard to the *ethical* difficulties, we shall

confess not infrequently to the children, "We don't think that now," or, "We don't like to think that," "Many people would feel that wrong and cruel to-day," and so on.

Having made some suggestions as to the general treatment of the Old Testament with the older children, we must now consider more in detail the choice of stories themselves.

This will largely depend upon our special aim for the religious period in the Day School, and this necessarily raises the question whether in truth there should be any such special aim at all. It has often been said of late, with profound truth, that there can be no line of cleavage between the religious and secular in education, that religion is not a department of life, but a way of looking at the whole, that education is one, just as God's Truth is one. It follows from this that it is possible for the religious point of view to emerge in any lesson—any story, any literature lesson, any history or geography or science lesson can be a vehicle for religious teaching. Therefore, with the older children it would be possible to take *any story whatever* in the Old Testament and to treat it religiously, by taking the story as it stands, not pointing the moral *for* the children, but leading them to discuss it freely, contrasting and comparing its ethical truths and religious concepts with those of the Christian religion. Thus no Old Testament story need be excluded from our choice; even the story of Elisha and the Bears could be a text for discussion on the ethics of punishment, the virtue of courtesy, the rights

of old age, or the difference between the Christian and the Hebrew idea of God.

This belief in the ultimately religious character of *any* happening was probably at the bottom of that treatment of the Old Testament stories which has found a place in every religious instruction syllabus until quite lately, *e. g.* teaching by "types"—Noah's Ark a type of the Church; the sacrifice of Isaac the type of Christ's Atonement; Joseph a type of Our Lord, and so on. This teaching by types—inherited, we believe, from the early Fathers of the Church—is, we are glad to note, rapidly passing away. A little child is unable to distinguish between type and fact, while an older child becomes easily proficient in discovering innumerable other types unguessed at by the teacher. The teacher himself is forced into a confusion, as Professor Driver has pointed out, between the original "interpretation" of a passage and its possible present "application," and finds himself passing on to the children such crude religious ideas as they will, or should, afterwards unlearn. For example, in treating the sacrifice of Isaac as a type of the Atonement we run a serious risk of giving our children an extremely crude and materialistic idea of the relation between the first and second Persons of the Trinity—"separating" between the Persons—an idea only too likely to make a child say (as did a child known to the writer), "I love Jesus, but I hate God."

But while as teachers of the older children we can feel free to use as general teaching material *any* of the Old Testament stories; while *any* lesson may be in a

sense a religious lesson; while it is true that all education is religious, it is true to say that some things are more explicitly religious [1] than others, and that in what is called the daily "religious period" of the school we shall want to confine ourselves to what we feel may definitely help the spiritual life of the children. We shall wish to apply to our stories the test we have previously suggested—"Will this story help the children to believe in the revelation of God as given by our Lord Jesus Christ—in the victorious Power of Love—in the reality of the spiritual world?" If not, the story may be useful, as we have suggested, for general teaching purposes, but it has no place in the religious lesson. The number of Old Testament stories that will stand this test is, we suggest, smaller than is often imagined; but if we apply the test with some strictness, we are not thereby, as we have suggested, excluding the majority of Old Testament stories from the teacher's repertoire—we are merely transferring them deliberately to the "secular" hours of the time-table, and we are avoiding thereby any temptations to treat the stories as what very obviously they are not.

For example, some teachers may feel that the story of Joseph (one of the most beautiful examples of Eastern romance) is more suitably treated in the *literature* period than in the religious lesson. It can then be read or played "in parts" by the children, consistently with its obvious dramatic character, and expeditions to any local museum with an Egyptian collection may be organised in connection with the lessons. (Recollections of Wat Tyler's rebellion, and

[1] See Campagnac, *Elements of Religion*, p. 27.

the fact that the children are living in a country aspiring to be democratic, will necessitate some free and honest discussion upon Joseph's statesmanship and apparent exploitation of the people's rights in the interest of his monarch.)

Again, the stories of Joshua and Judges and the later chapters of Kings are merely stories of exciting military exploits; should they not be taken in the *history* or *geography* lesson, if anywhere at all? If Joshua finds a place in the child's Pantheon of Heroes, it is surely as a type of the religiously-minded patriot who undertakes the invasion and subjection of a neighbouring country (together with any necessary "atrocities" connected therewith) in the interests of what he believes to be right—a character with strong resemblances to Oliver Cromwell.

Are not such stories as Noah's Ark, the Tower of Babel, Adam and Eve (the detailed consideration of this last we postpone to the close of this chapter), etc., together with other myths from other lands, best included in the children's weekly and daily "story hour"? Should not, similarly, the Song of Deborah, the Song of Miriam, and the Song of Solomon belong more properly to the *poetry period* rather than to that designated the religious lesson?

If some such allotment of the Old Testament stories were made, it would then be possible for the teacher in the religious instruction period to deal with such topics only as have a definitely spiritual and religious significance, and among such topics, study of certain of the Old Testament characters will assuredly find a place.

Abraham, the first personality we can lay hold on in the Old Testament narrative, gives us an example of an old Eastern sheikh with an intensely real and personal friendship for the God in Whom he believes. He is willing to give all to that God—even the life of his only son. Yet, while aiming to let the children feel the lonely faith and courage of Abraham, we must not be afraid of discussing with the children quite frankly his mistaken idea of God. Probably we shall not be able to avoid discussion also as to the part played by the ram in the story. As like as not, the whole question of the ethics of animal sacrifice will come to the front—must, indeed, at some time in our lesson course. To take the life of an animal as a means of showing our love to its Creator, or drawing nearer to Him, will naturally appear strange to a child whom at other times we are training to believe that—

> " He prayeth best who loveth best
> All things both great and small,
> For the Great God Who loveth us
> He made and loves them all."

But the whole question can be made a valuable means of showing the true and false in primitive thinking.

The character of *Moses* we shall want to put before the children as the man of courage and vision, whose conception of God is so spiritual that he can urge, " Make to thyself no graven image," whose heart is so unselfish that he can pray, " Blot me out of the Book of Life for the Children of Israel's sake," and yet whose vision of the Love of God is so limited that he can believe that this prayer might come true. We need in so long a biography as that of Moses to make our selections of material with care. A *rapid life-sketch*

is what the children want, without that undue prominence for the Plagues of Egypt which they so often receive. "We're sick of Moses," broke out a boy on an occasion. No teacher wishes such a result. (Some of us can remember the weary weeks of the Scripture lessons when, as children, we wandered continually in the wilderness of the books of Exodus and Numbers, stopping at every camping-ground, trying to recollect every "murmuring," winding our way through all the minute details of Tabernacle worship, climbing and re-climbing the Sacred Mount as was dictated by the elaborate repetition of the narrative.)

After all, it is the personality of *David* that really grips us most among all the characters of the Old Testament; his straightforwardness, honesty, generosity, faithfulness, passion, penitence. He has the artist soul, as his harp shows, although he also is a soldier by profession and his deeds are mainly those of the battlefield. Samuel—a rather shadowy person after the romance of his childhood—introduces his story, and Solomon, shadowy too, closes in the epic; but the thrilling interest of the story lies in the interplay between the heroic trio—David and Jonathan and Saul.

The children will easily admire David, and this very admiration for him will cause many of them to feel his generosity towards Saul somewhat of a "hard saying." The story of his sparing Saul in the cave is certain to give rise to lively discussion. The children will want to talk over why he did it, and whether they themselves would have done the same. Was it because Saul was a king and a former friend, or just

a helpless enemy taken off his guard? A teacher who follows only the "herd" instincts of his form may get no further than the discovery that the majority of the children think David's action "a bit soft," and are in agreement with David's men; a teacher who aims at something more will want to suggest the inquiry, "What would Jesus Christ have thought?" or give at least something of his own view as to the essential fineness of forbearance and magnanimity in the hour of victory, and the rarity and attractiveness of a compassionate forgiveness of enemies.

Such a legend as that of "the merciful knight" in one of its original versions, or as told in *John Inglesant*, may here come in as an illustration.

David's sin will also show another side of his character—his impulsiveness and thoughtlessness, his whole-hearted penitence and self-condemnation. There is nothing of the Pharisee about David, and there is nothing of the Pharisee about our school-children, except what we induce in them. With David's penitence (although we do not stress the authenticity of his authorship) can well be associated the reading of the 51st Psalm, omitting the last few verses, added later. The children may enjoy singing it or hearing it sung to a Plainsong melody, or to the beautiful setting of Allegri.

We may here, in passing, emphasise the usefulness of illustrative legend, poetry and music as a help in giving vividness to the Bible story. Browning's "Saul" must surely be carefully read and mused over, if not actually read to the class by the teacher, when dealing with the character of David. Handel's

" Saul," " Judas Maccabeus," Mendelssohn's " Elijah," should somehow be brought to the children's knowledge, even if some trouble has to be taken to bring this about. It should not be impossible to get some passable musician to come down to the school and play and sing some few selections.

The mention of Mendelssohn's music brings to mind another impressive character with which we shall want our children to make acquaintance—that of *Elijah the Prophet.* His indomitable courage, the mystery surrounding his sudden emergence and disappearance, his unwavering and fiercely intolerant faith, his moodiness, his dependence upon that inner " still small Voice "—all these make him one of the most fascinating of the Old Testament characters, and it is easy to grip attention with the stories of his life. (Probably the children in our Elementary Schools are too young to be led to appreciate the good points of the religion he so mercilessly attacked.) Indeed, the story of the Prophet Elijah is not usually omitted from the Day-School syllabus, though the other prophetic figures are often altogether ignored. Surely the children of our older standards should not leave school until they have made acquaintance with the 1st and 3rd Isaiah, Amos the preacher of the " housing problem "; Jeremiah " the true patriot "; Ezekiel the mystic; and John the Baptist, who belongs rather to the old order than to the new—for he could " boldly rebuke vice " and " witness for the truth," and yet his message was largely negative, and his conception of God still mainly that of a God of Fear.

By proceeding in our syllabus upon the principle

of selecting for the little children isolated stories giving concrete pictures of Love, and for the older boys and girls a series of heroic biographies, we have omitted all detailed consideration of a most important and controversial group of stories—*the stories of the Creation and the story of Adam and Eve.*

Let us turn our attention to the first of these—the story of the Creation of the World as contained in Gen. i–ii. 3. This finds a place, as we have said, in very many Infant School syllabuses, and much labour has been expended by teachers in the past upon getting the children to memorise the different " days," together with what was created upon each day. Yet this story of the Creation, when thus taken *literally*, is one which is most easily challenged by the taunting question, " Was the world made in a week? " or by a comparison of the marginal note, " Creation of the World 4004 B.C." with the most elementary knowledge gained in nature lessons, in science lessons, and in technical classes.

Let us take it for granted that the teacher of to-day does not intend to take the story of the Creation of the World in a literal manner. The difficulties are not solved by saying this. The practical problem of how to take this story with the children has yet to be faced. Even if we interpret the word " day " as meaning a " divine " day—a vast *period* of years (which is to do some violence to the text)—yet even such a " parabolic " interpretation of the story will not bring it into harmony with the discoveries of modern science. That the story tells of a gradual and not instantaneous process of creation is, of course, in line

with modern conceptions of Evolution, but it must be allowed that the *order* of the various stages of creation as described by the Genesis writers is not in agreement, but rather in direct contradiction to, the conclusions of scientists to-day. For example, in Gen. i., the creation of land and water antedates the " making " of the whole solar system, and it is by no means possible to-day to be dogmatic as to the appearance of plant-life before that of animal life. It is held by some scientists that the first appearance of life may have been in animal form, and have originated not on the land, but in the sea.

Is it, then, better to omit the stories of the Creation altogether from the classes in our Elementary Schools?

We think this would be an unfortunate conclusion. Looking out on the world at the present time, especially upon what we call " Industrial England," we cannot fail to be struck not only by the general lack of beauty in modern town life, but by the no less general lack of any expressed desire for it. While a day's migration of city dwellers to the country leaves behind on its return a residue of waste paper, scored tree-trunks, and cast-away flowers, while a town " watch " committee will frequently not entertain the thought of convicting the owner of a factory chimney belching horrible smoke, while open spaces are still so few and far between, while so few town houses have gardens worthy of the name at all, it cannot be said that the sense of beauty of Nature is widely diffused among us. " The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork," sang the old Psalmist; yet to how many of our town dwellers walking beneath

the starry skies does there come any message of divine wonder and mystery?

Moreover, the dwellers in the country are in many cases just as deaf and blind. It is astonishing how little do most village folk know of the world of animals and plants around them, or notice the sky, or weather, or landscape, except in relation to their daily needs; while the world of poetry, which deals so largely with such sides of life, is for the most part entirely closed to them.

Surely we need to endeavour to arouse in our children, before they harden into adult life and are too weary and busy to begin learning to enjoy, some of Christ's sense of the beauty and wonder of Nature. To Him, as we remember, it was worth while to spend time (to waste it, some of us would think) in "considering the lilies of the field and the fowls of the air"; to Him these brought the profoundest thoughts, for all were creatures of the Father's care, even a dying sparrow falling to the ground.

He did not give a solution of—indeed, He did not even allude to the problem of "Nature red in tooth and claw," but we may be sure that He did not add to her suffering, and that His thought was concentrated upon her beauty and her joy.

Surely this is the temper of mind we want our children to have, and this is what they are more prone to have than some of us imagine.

Feeling this, we shall want to bring a real atmosphere of joy and reverence into our Nature work with the children. As we have before suggested, we shall not imagine that we can make a hard-and-fast line between

what we call religious and what we call secular in our teaching. The best end to many a Nature lesson may be some act of prayer or praise, or the reading of some Psalm or piece of poetry, rather than the drawing of the parts of a flower, or the summary of the uses of an animal; many a Nature lesson may more suitably be taken in the "religious" period than outside it. We must boldly recognise the help of Nature Study in our religious teaching, especially with the little children. We shall deliberately try to help them to rejoice in the glories of the Creation around them. We shall bring them flowers and moss and grasses, winter buds and autumn leaves, sea-shells and wild fruits, and pictures of the places where they were found, and of the animals who lived among them. We shall aim to let the children feel, not that ages past God made the world, set it going and left it alone, but that Creation is still a present Divine act—that the Creative Love of God is "new every morning."

This means that we must give the children *time to enjoy and to wonder*—that such a hymn as "All things bright and beautiful" may well provide us a syllabus not for one, but for many weeks. Thus, when we bring the story of Gen. i. to the children, it will come as a beautiful piece of poetry, recapitulating, summarising what has slowly and for some time soaked into their minds.

With the older children again; if, to use Professor Keatinge's phrase, we want the idea of Creation to become "massive" to them, if the beauty and breadth of thought in Gen. i. is to have its appeal, then here, too, we must work slowly.

We must help the children *to reconstruct the Story of Creation from the universe around them.*

First of all, we must get them to put to themselves and the world the great fundamental question, which men of all time have asked, "How did everything begin?" The contents of our class-room may set us on that quest. We may trace back the past history of the wooden desk at which we sit—back to the great forest tree—to the acorn—to its tree—its acorn—right back to the beginning. What *was* the beginning? We may do the same with the door-key, the blackboard chalk—anything that we see may lead us back to the question that no human being can answer of himself, for none was there to see.

In the beginning was only *God.* It is to the first chapter of St. John that we should lead the children to turn for the story of Creation, to read there how "in the beginning was the thought, and the thought was with God, and the thought was God. All things were made by It, and without It was not anything made that was made." But "how?" asks child and man. So we must pass on with the children to begin to spell out the story of the making from the pages of God's Book of Nature.

A photograph of a star cluster or nebula may set the children off on reconstructing the story of the beginning of our earth; a crystal or prism may set them thinking over the wonder of Light—its joy and healing power, from the glory of the rainbow to the mystery of the X-ray and wireless telegraphy.

Specimens of the different stages of creation—inorganic, organic, plant and animal, we shall need

to bring the children—rocks, fossils and the rest—and photographs (see Pictures and Illustrations for the Teacher, Series XIII., published by the National Society), where we cannot bring specimens. We may encourage the children to bring specimens too. A "Creation story" exhibition was collected enthusiastically in a school known to the writer—the children searching eagerly in home and lane for something that had a "story" to tell. The treasures were not very wonderful—a glass "lustre" from the mantelpiece ornament at home; a bit of slate or sandstone; a lava or jet brooch from abroad; a polished pebble; a piece of coal snatched from the coal-box and showing the trace of a fern; an amber pipe-stem; a lead pencil; a shell—yet all helped the children to read with interest the stories of God's Nature-Book, to wonder over the history of the making of this land of ours, and of the life that came upon it. Moreover, the occupation sets the children exploring; even the lichen on the bark of the tree in the playground, even the green slime of the school water-butt may be pages in God's Book of Nature, leading us back to the beginning of all things—leading us back to God.

Along with such detailed study as we have suggested, (*e. g.* the examination of specimens, stones, fossils and photographs), will be associated any beautiful religious poetry we can find, whether in the Bible or outside it (*e. g.* Psalms xix., xxix., civ., etc. and some familiar hymns).[1]

Also in towns it ought to be possible in connection with the religious lesson as well as with the secular

[1] See King Aknaton's beautiful Hymn of Praise, so closely allied in thought and form to Ps. civ. (Breasted's *History of Egypt*).

lesson to organise visits to the local museum, or to use specimens therefrom in the school itself.

But when we have led the children slowly to reconstruct for themselves something of the story of Creation from God's own Book of Nature, and then to read alongside of this the attempt of the old Hebrew writer of Genesis i. to read the same Book, we shall be face to face with the most important matter of all—the final stage of physical Creation—the Creation of Man.

"Man in God's Image" (for we shall confine our Creation narrative to the first chapter of Genesis) is a conception of the greatest importance to the children, which we shall have to consider very carefully how to approach. They will be easily interested in thinking over the human powers of man, and his superiority to all forms of animal life; and they will like to revive their early history lessons on "Primitive Man" (or to have these gaps filled up if there are no such recollections to revive), and to consider how these powers were developed. (Surely one of the most important aims of the "religious" period is to draw together and to unify the knowledge gained during the periods which we call "secular").

Moreover, in making such a survey we want the children to feel that the story of man is not merely, or even mainly, the story of man's dominion over the earth—of what we call "civilisation"—but what matters most is his slow though continual realisation of himself as a spiritual being, and his advance towards a belief in, and a working out of, the Divine law of the Universe —the law of Love. We ought to be able to lead the older children to trace something of this progress, from

the primitive love of mere physical life to the love of family, friends, clan, tribe, nations, enemies—all. The thought of the Ideal of Brotherhood underlying the phrase " The League of Nations," ought surely to find a place not only in the history and geography lesson, but also, and most important of all, in the period for religious instruction.

For the child is naturally a friend of all the world, and boys and girls find it easy to see how useless it is for man to have so wonderfully extended his powers of locomotion and communication and his range of scientific knowledge if these are but to be used by him in his own self-destruction.

Lessons with the children on the Creation of Man must surely close with consideration of the Life and Teaching of Our Lord as at once exemplifying and pointing the way to the realisation of what it means to be *actually*, as well as potentially, " in the Image of God."

Let us now, before quitting the subject of the Old Testament, give some further thought to that most difficult Genesis story, the story of Adam and Eve, a story which is being told at the present time in hundreds of Day and Sunday Schools to the youngest of our children. It is useful for the teacher before considering the treatment of this story with the children to study the narrative again with some care. Frequently we are under the impression that we know this familiar story so well that we can teach it without any preparation, and thus it is not uncommon to hear a teacher tell a class that the serpent was the Devil, and that the forbidden fruit was an apple—neither of

which statements are to be found in the story itself. In fact, much of what is usually taught as the story of the Fall comes not from the Bible, but from Milton's *Paradise Lost.*

We find, then, the story of Adam and Eve imbedded in the Creation story of Genesis ii. 4, *et seq.*, and following the Creation story of Genesis i. and ii. 1–3. A preliminary comparison between the two stories is worth making. Our older scholars will enjoy making this comparison for themselves, and will be further interested to see the advance[1] made by Hebrew writers on the Babylonian Creation and Deluge stories as deciphered on the recently discovered Assyrian clay tablets in the libraries at Nineveh, Babel, etc. The following translations may be useful.

An Assyrian Creation Myth

At that time the heavens named not a name,
Nor did the earth below record one:
Yea, the deep was their first creator,
The flood of the sea was she who bore them all.
Their waters were embosomed in one place, and
The flowering reed was ungathered, the marsh plant was ungrown.

At that time the gods had not issued forth, any one of them;

[1] Note in comparing the accounts of the Creation in these and in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, the absence in the latter of any "tumult" or "strife" and the conception of *One* God rather than many. It is, however, probable that Genesis i. was based on an older polytheistic version, traces of which remain in such a phrase as "our image," "one of us."

By no name were they recorded, no destiny (had they fixed).
Then the great gods were made,
Lakhmu and Lakhamu issued forth (the first).
They grew up . . .
Next were made the host of heaven and earth.
The time was long (and then)
The gods Anu (Bel and Ea were born of)
The host of heaven and earth.

"At that time, the gods in their assembly created (the living creatures). They made beautiful the mighty (animals). They made the living beings come forth—the cattle of the field, the beast of the field, and the creeping things."

(From *Fresh Lights from Ancient Monuments*, A. H. Sayce).

Another Assyrian Creation Myth

Tiamat, the darkness of the deep, and Apsu, ocean, brought forth many children. First among these were Lachmu and Lachamu, the dragon gods; and afterwards there followed Anshar and Kishar, and Anu, and Bel, and Merodach, and many others. But Tiamat feared her own offspring, and took counsel with Apsu how she might destroy them all. And Apsu rejoiced thereat, and together they plotted evil. . . .

Then the gods came all together to the banquet, and declared Merodach supreme among them. . . .

Then the gods gave him throne and crown and sceptre, and in his hand they put a resistless sword,

and sent him forth to slay their mother, Tiamat. . . . But Merodach cast his net about her, and his winds smote her on every side, driving her this way and that; and he thrust her asunder with his lance, and cut her all in pieces. . . .

And all the gods rejoiced. . . .

Then Merodach clave the deep in two parts, and divided the waters below from the waters above. He created all the starry host, and set them in the heavens like a flock of shining sheep. And he divided the year into seasons, and set bounds to the firmament, that none of the stars should go astray out of its course. And the sun he made to govern the day, and the moon to govern the night. And all the living things he brought forth, and the beasts and the creeping things of the field.

And two also he made to be mighty and to have dominion over the moving things of the earth. . . .

(From *The History of the People of Israel*, Mary Sarson and Mabel A. Phillips.)

An Assyrian Deluge Myth

The city of Shirappak was full of violence. Wherefore the gods resolved to make a flood, and they took counsel together. But Ia had heard their talk, and he called to him a man of Shirappak, by name Nuh-napishtim, whom he loved, and bade him build a ship, equal in length and breadth and height, and launch it on the waters. And when the people of the city questioned him thereof, he should say that the god, the lord of the land, was his enemy, and that he might

no more dwell on the earth, but that henceforth his home should be upon the waters. So Nuh-napishtim built the ship; and its height and its length were one hundred and forty cubits; and it had six storeys, and nine chambers in each storey; and the outside was smeared with pitch. And he put therein great store of meat and drink, and gold and silver; and his family and his kinsman, and much beasts and cattle he took on board.

And at evening the Lord of the Storm caused a great rain; and at morning a black cloud arose in the heavens, and Rimmon sent forth his thunders, and the gods marched over hill and plain scattering destruction, and the spirits of the earth made their torches to flash through the world, and the light of heaven was turned into darkness. Then the wind lifted itself up, and the helm of the ship was torn away; and the waves joined all together and warred upon mankind, so that the gods themselves feared, and fled away, and wept and lamented in heaven for the destruction they had made.

Six days the storm continued, and on the seventh there was peace; but the land was desolate, and all mankind was turned to clay.

Then Nuh-napishtim beheld land, and came towards the country of Nizir, and the mountain of Nizir caught the ship that it stuck fast. Six days it stuck, and on the seventh sent he forth a dove. And she went and returned to him again. Then sent he forth a swallow, and she went and returned to him again. At last he sent a raven, and she went and fed and returned not again. So he brought all things to the land, and made a great sacrifice to the gods; and the gods smelled the

sweet odour, and hovered like flies above the sacrifice. . . . Thereupon the great goddess at her approach lighted up the rainbow which Anu had created according to his glory. The crystal brilliance of those gods before me may I not forget.

And Bel was wroth that one man had escaped destruction; but Ninib bade him lay aside his anger, for that it had not been meet utterly to destroy the race of men. So Bel came down and took Nuh-napishtim by the hand; his wife also he took, and blessed them both. And he said: "Ye truly were mortals; but now shall ye be like to us gods; and ye shall dwell far away from man, at the mouth of the rivers."

(From *The History of the People of Israel,* Sarson and Phillips.)

Let us then make a rough comparison in two columns between the two Creation Stories of Gen. i. and ii. 1–3 and Gen. ii. 4–iii.

1st Story. Genesis i & ii. 1–3.	2nd Story. Genesis ii. 4 *et seq.*
Waters created before the earth (i. 6).	Earth first, then waters (ii. 6).
Order of creation of living things as follows— birds, beasts, mankind (including men and women).	Order of creation of living things as follows— man, birds, beasts, woman *from* man.
Mankind made in the "Image of God."	No mention of man being made in the "Image of God"—the reverse is implied in Gen. iii. 22. Man is made of the "dust of the earth" into which God breathes "the breath of life."

1st Story. Genesis i & ii. 1–3.	2nd Story. Genesis ii. 4 *et seq.*
Man made lord of the whole earth.	Man the "dresser of Eden."
To man is given "every tree and herb for meat."	*One* tree forbidden; it is not very clear from the narrative *which* tree this is (see Gen. iii. 9 and 17), for the tree "in the midst of the garden" is said to be the Tree of Life.
The general command given to "be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth."	A state of "innocence" is implied, and the birth of children occurs after the "Fall" as a punishment.
Word used for "God" = ELOHIM (the same word as is translated "God" or "gods" indiscriminately throughout the Old Testament).	Word used for "God" = JAHVEH or JEHOVAH (translated "Lord God" in the Authorised Version).

The story of Adam and Eve, Gen. ii. 4 *et seq.*, is, so scholars tell us, full of difficulties. Some of these occur even to the casual reader ignorant of Hebrew.

It is hardly possible to escape the conclusion that the story is a parable—a myth—and even children can recognise it as such. They know that the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil" is not one to be seen in any visible forest, even in the faraway East; they know it is a magic tree, growing in a magic garden. A clergyman's little five-year-old daughter, to whom the story was read without comment by her very intelligent and thoughtful mother, remarked at once on its close: "Mummy, I think that story is a kind of a *fairy* story."

Surely she judged rightly.

If, indeed, the story of Adam and Eve were told to young children as a story of "Jahveh-Elohim and the Garden He made"—a story from the childhood of the world told to the children of another age, it might do

them no harm, and certainly would delight them by its poetry and vivid imagery; but unfortunately the story in our English version brings in the Name of *God*, and this ought to call up in a child's mind a picture of the Loving Heavenly Father revealed by our Lord Jesus Christ. The child ought to be, and often is, perplexed at such a loving Father acting as the Jahveh of that story is said to have done.

A thoughtful child may criticise the God thus revealed. A compassionate child may apologise for Him.

"I think God *ought* to have killed that serpent," ejaculated a six-year-old boy after hearing in class the story of Adam and Eve.

"Doesn't God love the Devil *too?*" queried another of the same age. A four-year-old, to whom the story was told, asked her teacher at once: "Why did God tell Adam and Eve not to eat that apple?" then, receiving no satisfactory answer, reflected, "I expect He wanted it for Himself"—the net result of the story on the child being to show the God of Infinite Love and Perpetual Self-giving as a God of selfishness and greed.

In short, the story is not suitable for the young child.

It is encouraging to find this view shared by Professor Nairne in his appendix on "The Old Testament" in the recent Archbishop's Committee's *Report on the Teaching Office of the Church.* He affirms: "The first eleven chapters of Genesis are not fitted for them (young children)."

But what about the young child who has heard the story? and what about the older children? To the child who has been told the story and asks about it, we must frankly admit that it is a story of what

men of old thought God was like. "*We* know that God is quite different," and we may surely go on to tell Our Lord's story of Sin and Forgiveness—namely, the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

With the older children let us discuss the story fully. The approach is important. If we can get the children to put themselves into the point of view of the old Eastern Seer who wrote down the story, as an answer to the problems that vexed his mind so long ago, and which continue to vex our minds to-day, we shall have prepared them to notice and also to excuse the tremendous difference between his view-point and that of a follower of Christ, and to recognise the inadequate answers he was forced to give to the problems that to a Christian are solved by Our Lord Himself.

For example, the children will easily discover that in the old Seer's view, hard manual labour—"in the sweat of thy face" to eat bread—was a curse and a punishment. To the Carpenter of Nazareth work was no curse, and His command of Love makes it surely incumbent upon us to see to it that no one in all the land to-day finds his daily labour merely a punishment and curse.

To the old Seer the creeping serpent was accursed too (an old clay tablet, some believe, which shows Adam and Eve before the Fall, erect and hand in hand, shows also the serpent erect, standing respectably on the tip of his tail!). To Our Lord all creatures were the creatures of the Father's care.

To the old Seer the sorrowful subjection of women seemed a permanent punishment from God. To Our Lord men and women were equal souls, free, not slaves.

To the writer of Gen. ii. and iii., the golden age lay behind; to Our Lord it was both now and to come—"The Kingdom is within you"—"Thy Kingdom come."

To the writer, again, death was the end of all, "unto dust shalt thou return"—a *punishment*, too, from God. To Our Lord death was a going "to the Father"—"if ye loved Me ye would rejoice."

To the Eastern writer, God was like one of the men he knew, walking, speaking with a voice, "moulding" dust, "sewing" fig leaves for clothes. He is terrible; His children shrink from Him in fear; He is jealous lest man become like Himself. He drives him from the Tree of Life and visits him with irrevocable punishment, even after his confession of guilt. In our Lord's words, God is a *Spirit* to be worshipped in spirit and in truth; the Heavenly Father Who "Himself loveth you," Who does not punish, but forgives His returning prodigal, Who sends His Son that men may have life and that "more abundantly," and Who commands us by that same Son—"Be ye therefore perfect, *even as* your Father which is in Heaven."

To the old Eastern Seer the problem of the origin of evil was fundamental; yet he could not think that evil came from either man or God; and to him a chosen sin meant inevitably a fall. To this problem—the origin of evil—Christ gives no answer. Surely, before we are half-way through the lesson with our children we shall find ourselves discussing the meaning of the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil," and what the eating of it really signifies. We must note first of all that it is a Tree of *good* as well as of *evil* "knowledge." Every perceived Fall is, in a sense, also

a Rise. God leaves us free to sin if we will. If we do not sin Good has its way with us; if we do sin, yet Good has still its way, according to God's Law of Love.

> "but do your best
> Or worst, praise rises, and will rise for ever."

Some of us are like those children who, when told of the sharpness of a knife-edge, avoid both it and suffering too; some of us are like the children who must adventure for themselves and touch the knife-edge and suffer for the experience—must eat of the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil," whose fruits are pain and sorrow and yet wisdom too. We may let our class read and discuss Browning's lines—

> "Held we fall to rise,
> Are baffled to fight better."

Or Tennyson's—

> "Men may rise on stepping-stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things."

But the many other points of this discussion must naturally be left to the discretion and conviction of the teacher and the maturity and eagerness of the class.

CHAPTER III

THE PROBLEM OF MEMORY-WORK IN RELATION TO MODERN EDUCATIONAL METHOD: RECAPITULATION AND SELF-EXPRESSION

Is Memory-Work really a "present-day problem in religious teaching" when so much has been said and written on the subject during the last ten years? Have we not revolutionised our educational outlook in this generation? Do we not smile at the rote-learning of our grandmothers—*Magnall's Questions* and the *Child's Guide to Knowledge?* Would any intelligent teacher nowadays dream of beginning the study of geography with the chanting of "A-peninsula-is-a-piece-of-land-partly-surrounded-by-water," or the study of arithmetic by the tearful repetition of the multiplication table, or grammar by the committing to memory of the definitions of the parts of speech, or even geometry by grinding in Euclid's axioms and postulates? Surely it is a platitude in educational method to say that we must work slowly, arousing the child's interest, awakening his thought and reflection, encouraging him to express himself in his own crude way—that, in short, verbal generalisation, Definition, is the End of thought and not its Beginning. It is recognised by every enlightened educationist that the custom of

requiring children to memorise set questions and answers is becoming laughably obsolete—no keen teacher being content to have his "questions" made up for him, and no keen child being content to have his "answer" given him ready-made and a stop put to that adventure after truth on which the question deliberately set him going.[1]

In opening again the question of memorising in religious teaching, are we not flogging a dead horse? We could wish it were so; but the fact remains that sheer unintelligent rote-work in connection with religious teaching is still prevalent in our Elementary Schools, and takes up, in too many cases, the greater part of the time.

A few examples from the writer's experiences will serve for illustration.

I can recollect a teacher in an Infant School taking "repetition" with her class of six-year-olds for thirty-five minutes on end, the method of procedure being to start the infants repeating, "The-eyes-*of*-the-Lord-are-in-every-place-the-eyes-*of*-the-Lord," etc., while she made entries in the register, and was able to catch them up at the end with "beholding-the-evil-*and*-the-good."

In another school the sympathetic teacher, in despair at the task before her, had trained her infants (who were required to "prove" the Ten Commandments by Bible texts!) to repeat their texts with appropriate "actions." "Prove the Eighth Commandment," ordered the teacher, and the children began, shaking their heads

[1] See the Archbishop's Committee's *Report on the Teaching Office of the Church.*

dolefully from side to side. "Let-him-that-*stole*-steal-no-more-but-rather-let-him-*labour*-working-with-his-hands" (here they waved their own) "the-thing-that-is-*good*" (they nodded approvingly) "that-he-may-*have*" (they pointed to their chests for some obscure reason) "to-*give*" (here they stretched out their hands) "to-him-that-*needeth*," and the exercise ended with each child pointing to the apparently prosperous head mistress.

In yet another school the writer can remember teaching in one class-room while a Bible story was being told in the next room to Standards IV and V. It was the story of I Samuel i., but in point of fact it was a rote-learning exercise. The teacher confined herself to paraphrasing, quite barely, the Bible narrative, and securing and keeping the attention of the children by compelling them to repeat aloud at intervals throughout the story any examples that occurred of "direct speech." For a long time I could hear the children repeating "And-Eli-said-unto-*her*," "and-Eli-said-unto-*her*," "*How*-long-wilt-thou-be-drunken?", "*How*-long-wilt-thou-be-drunken?" "Put-away-thy-*wine*-from-thee," "Put-away-thy-*wine*-from-thee." "And-Eli-said," etc. Two girls (who had presumably rebelled against such instructional methods) were standing behind the blackboard for punishment all the time.

"We *can't* teach religion—we have to cram," said two head teachers on one occasion when discussing the question of inspection and examination.

A capable young teacher known to the writer, coming out fresh from college, full of ideals and en-

thusiasm, to take up work in an East-End slum school, found herself faced with the disheartening task of forcing sixty already neglected and pitiful "infants" to learn by rote the Psalm, "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?" Speaking of her prescribed work of teaching the words of the Church Catechism to those same infants she said naïvely and sadly, "I *have* to be cross with them—I can't get it done unless. *I have to stand over them* and drill and drill." Her feeling was that of many another earnest teacher—that it is easy for those in authority to "require" the memorising of this or that on the part of children, but only the teacher day by day compelled to carry through the task knows *what has to be done and threatened to secure the desired result.* If many of those in authority knew of the actual daily happenings of the class-room under such conditions, it is safe to say they would be as much surprised as shocked.

Naturally much of this "cram-work" has been done in Church Schools subject to unenlightened methods of examination. A resolution upon this matter was sent to the Archbishop of Canterbury by the N.U.T. in the early part of 1918. A Committee of Inquiry was then appointed by the National Society, which sat during the summer, investigating the conditions of inspection and examination in all the dioceses. A report was issued showing the extent to which enlightened methods of inspection have already superseded the old-time "examinations," and urging an extension of these methods. In a growing number of dioceses to-day it is not possible for any teacher to claim that unintelligent memorising is forced upon him from with-

out, although it is true to say that still, in a number of districts, any teacher who wants a " good report " from the Diocesan Inspector must conform to such methods.

But the question of memory work in religious teaching permeates yet deeper into our current practice: for learning by rote still finds a place in Council, as well as Church Schools, and in such Church Schools as are free to work on their own lines. It is a more fundamental question than many of us recognise; it is clearly bound up with our basic conception of religion, and it is connected with various so-called educational " maxims " and " phrases " which rest on very doubtful authority, and certainly will bear reconsideration at the present time.

" Storing the Mind " is one of these phrases.[1] " Store the child's mind when he is young; he may not like it at the time, but later he will come back and thank you for it." Unfortunately (as is the case to-day with many of the parents of our school-children who never darken a church door), *if they do not want to thank us they do not come back.*

It is of no avail to store a child's " memory-cupboard " if he has so little later interest in the contents of the shelves that he never turns the key; such a memory cupboard approximates to the " glory-hole " many of us keep at home, where in some drawer or corner we accumulate anything that we hope may

[1] Modern psychologists would not, for a moment, allow the use of such a crude phrase in relation to the mind and its powers. As Dr. Ebbinghaus puts it: " To express our ideas . . . we use different metaphors, stored-up ideas, engraved images, well-beaten paths. There is only one thing certain about these figures of speech, and that is that they are not suitable."

" come in useful " until patience gives out or hygiene comes to our rescue, and we consign our heaps to the dust-bin.

" Fixing the Truth " is another phrase. The hope is expressed that if the child's mind is indelibly impressed with certain words, those words will remain when the ideas expressed in them are in danger of fading, or have ceased to have any meaning at all. Chaplains at the front have lately been telling us, " The men know nothing!" "There is a terrible lack of definite teaching," forgetful that not every man will reveal his deepest self even to his chaplain, and sometimes words which seem most " definite " are no revelation at all. More thoughtful observers give us a different witness—compare, for example, the testimony of Rev. W. Studdert Kennedy, C.F., in *The Hardest Part*, and that of a " Student-at-Arms " (killed in battle in France). A quotation from the latter's *Diary* may be of service. " Here were men who believed absolutely in the Christian virtues of unselfishness, generosity, charity and humility without ever connecting them in their minds with Christ; and at the same time what they did associate with Christianity was just on a par with the formalism and smug self-righteousness which Christ spent His life trying to destroy. The chaplains as a rule failed to realise this. They saw the inarticulateness, and assumed a lack of any religion. They remonstrated with their hearers for not saying their prayers, and not coming to Communion, and not being afraid to die without making their peace with God. They did not grasp that the men really had deep-seated beliefs in goodness, and that the only reason why they did not

pray and go to Communion was that they never connected the goodness in which they believed with the God in Whom the chaplains said they ought to believe."

At any rate, two considerations are worth bearing in mind. First of all, modern psychologists, with their growing insistence on the importance of the sub-conscious mind"—"the subliminal self," etc., would reject *instanter* any description of mind which could approximate to the idea of a mechanical "cupboard" to be deliberately stored. Moreover, if it be true that the unconscious memory never forgets, that all past experience is available for use (and becomes sometimes available under abnormal conditions), then it is vitally important to recognise that a child may indeed remember his formula—his set form of words—but he may also remember, associated with it in a fixed "constellation," those feelings of boredom, dislike, fear of punishment, etc., with which the memorised text and words were originally associated.

Secondly, this belief in "fixing the truth," in endeavouring to get premature definition from the children, results in the class-room, not only, as we have suggested, in engendering feelings of dislike in the children and mechanical drill "methods" in the teacher, but actually leads the teacher in many cases to teach the children what they will afterwards have to unlearn, or deliberately to suppress the thinking that he is trying to arouse. Thus the teaching of the Ten Commandments to the infants becomes a mere travesty on the original meaning of the words; the Fifth Commandment being paraphrased as, "I must do what Mother tells me," and the Tenth as, "I must not

be greedy." The writer remembers hearing a teacher endeavouring to elicit a " formula " from her infants' class after telling them the story of the Crossing of the Red Sea. " Why could God lead those people through the Red Sea? " she asked. After rejecting some answers, " Because He was kind," " Because He loved them," " Because He was good," etc., she obtained what she wanted—" Because He was *Almighty*." The children were required to " fix " this by repeating aloud, " God could lead the children of Israel through the Red Sea because He was ' Almighty.' " Then she went on, " What is Almighty? " " *Almighty*-means-God-can-do-anything," repeated the children, who had learnt the sentence previously, and were not, of course, thinking at all.

" Is there anything God cannot do? " pursued the teacher. Here the children began to think and hands were put up eagerly. " Build houses," said a keen boy in the front row, and a host of similar suggestions poured out. The teacher, obviously horrified at the emergence of such heresy, had recourse again to the sheer weight of repetition—" *God cannot sin.* Is-there-anything-God-cannot-do? Say after me, ' *God-cannot-sin.*' "

" The Golden Age of Memory " is another cliché deserving of thought, for it is a splendid weapon in the hand of the supporter of early rote-learning. That there is a " Golden Age of Memory " is a generally-held belief, but the exact period indicated by this shows remarkable varieties. Some would place the period during the first five or six years; others, equally certain, assert " eight to eleven "; others maintain " a general

development of memory power from the age of eight to fourteen." "From fourteen onwards," as Dr. Sandiford concludes, "some investigators find that no progress is made, while others find only a slight improvement. It is probable that memory power remains fairly stationary from adolescence to the age of fifty, and then suffers a gradual decline." (*Mental and Physical Life of School Children*, Dr. Sandiford.)

A number of men and women, now between forty and sixty years of age, known to the author, maintain that at the present time they can learn by heart what they wish as well as ever they could in their past life; others equally bewail their inability now as ever to learn by heart anything at all. Some people have always a "golden age" of memory; some have never had one. In truth, memory is too individual a matter to generalise about very easily; and as yet we have not sufficient material, gathered either by psychological experiment [1] or from common experience, to justify us in making on it any precise dogmatic statements whatever. The only safe conclusion at present to be drawn is that the best authorities differ!

What we need in this matter of memorising in religious teaching, is, indeed, more real *knowledge*, and this to be derived, not from books, but from the practical experience of grown-up people of all kinds. A straight questionnaire honestly answered might be of considerable use; for in this matter of memory we are tempted to be far from honest. Let us suggest a few typical

[1] See tables on investigations into the memory powers of school-children in Dr. Sandiford's *Mental and Physical Life of School-Children*, e. g. by Bilton, Pohlmann, Smedley, Ebbinghaus, Shaw, Kirkpatrick, Lobsum, Norworthy.

questions to put to ourselves and to other teachers and parents.

(1) *How far* do definite words and phrases help us at all in our individual spiritual life—in cases of doubt, difficulty, pain, sorrow and death, or in the humdrum of every day? The answers will be various. A certain number of people will certainly, if they are candid, answer, "They do not help at all." Something much deeper than words comes to their assistance; remembered phrases are of no avail. Others will answer, "Words are of infinite value," and between these two classes will be found innumerable grades of those who are helped much or little.

Assuming that for many—perhaps most—people words and phrases *are* a help, let us put to ourselves a further question—

(2) *What* words or phrases do help? *Not* "what words and phrases ought to help us?" *not* "what words and phrases do you think ought to help other people?" but "what words and phrases help *us?*" The answers will again vary considerably. Verses from hymns, Psalms, portions from the Gospels and Epistles, prayers and versicles from the Book of Common Prayer, phrases from the Apostles' Creed or Communion Office—these will probably be the more usual replies.

In cases where the writer has been able to take such a questionnaire, it is noticeable how few people, if any, are accustomed to recall as a help in their own spiritual life the words of the first part of the Church Catechism or of the Ten Commandments. In the vast majority of cases the words and phrases, however they may vary, will be found to be *devotional* and

poetical—to have the common notes of Beauty and Truth. "The virtue of poetry, as the instrument of deep feeling and high thinking, lies in this—that it says many things to many men, and so leaves each man free to interpret its message for himself." (*The Secret of the Cross*, E. Holmes.)

Having then honestly made some attempt to determine the contents of our own memory store, let us face a further inquiry—

(3) *How* were those helpful words and phrases *actually learnt? Under what conditions* did the memorising take place?

The answers, we venture to prophecy, will show less variety than before; for many people will confess that what has helped them most in the way of words and phrases has been acquired they know not how—soaked in unconsciously in public and private worship—made their own by continual voluntary use and recall—received and retained by them in an atmosphere of beauty and of truth.

This thought surely gives us very definite help in the problem of how to make memorising *an actual means of religious teaching*, and it should have no place in the religious period unless it can be called such.

The "atmosphere" under which memorising is to take place, in which the words and phrases are to be introduced, must then be a *religious* atmosphere. The introduction of these words and phrases must arouse a desire to recall and use them, and any such recall and use must always be in the same *religious* atmosphere.

But this religious atmosphere, to those who believe in

Our Lord's Revelation of God, must be an atmosphere of Love; so, if our memorising is to be "religious," it must be free from all force, dislike, drill, bribery, etc. This is saying a good deal. Our test question for any piece of memory work *as a means of religious teaching* is: "Will it be done by the child without compulsion, dislike, drill, bribery? If so, it is right; if not, it is wrong."

And again, at the risk of repetition, we must remember that memory work is primarily an individual matter. The writer knew a distinguished Canon who, when at the age of seven, had quite voluntarily, unforced, unbribed, learnt by heart much of the Athanasian Creed. It was quite the right thing for him to be doing; but if we were led astray by this fact to insist on *all* children of seven learning by heart the Athanasian Creed, we should find ourselves compelled to resort to unreligious—anti-religious—methods of treatment, to force or bribery, and our memorising would cease to be a religious exercise at all.

Let us now come back again to the memorising of hymns, prayers, psalms, and Bible texts. A detailed consideration of the first three topics we will postpone till the next chapter. On Bible texts we will now say a word or two, and first with reference to the infants.

Here the children will probably succeed in learning much by heart by the unconscious method of listening to the telling of the teacher's Bible stories, the words of the original narrative being interwoven very often into the tale. Sometimes a single text can be used as the title of a group of stories, and kept printed or illuminated on the blackboard. Later the children will probably like to choose their own texts and make and illustrate

their own text-books—so much more interesting an exercise than the learning of a printed and invariable list of teachers' texts. To print a text, too, can be for a child something of a religious exercise, to be done in a religious atmosphere. A talk (or several) may be given on the monks of old days and their earnest work in the cloisters day by day, painting and illuminating, to the accompaniment of prayer, those old Bibles and Service-Books we treasure to-day; such stories as that of the Venerable Bede, or "Brother Hilary," by Michael Fairless, may be told, and the result be to redeem the exercise of printing from any "mechanical" taint. I can recollect the entire absorption of a class of so-called heavy village children over such work, the reluctance with which they abandoned it, and the eagerness with which they returned to it at every opportunity (using the drawing and painting "periods" whenever allowed), taking home their productions proudly at the week-end "to show Mother."

There is no doubt that most of the children in our Day School classes have, under right conditions, both a fundamental *love of poetry* and a fundamental *love of collecting and making things*. Both these "loves" may be made use of in connection with religious teaching. Could not each child leaving school at thirteen or fourteen go out with at least three or four books made by himself? Could not each child make his own *Psalm-book*, choosing those Psalms which appeal to him, making his own "book," and illuminating in it? We need not to ask him to learn the Psalms by heart after such an exercise; he has done that as he wrote. Could not our children in the upper standards similarly make

their own *Hymn-books* and *Prayer-books?* (Many adolescents and grown-up people find it a help to have a collection of privately collected prayers which have been found to be of use.) Could not also some of the five periods of the week assigned to religious instruction be occupied by the older children in getting to love, copy out and learn some of the beautiful passages from the *Prophets*—so that a *Prophet-book* made by each child might be added to his self-constructed library? We may note in passing that continuous passages (whether from the Prophets or the Gospels or Epistles) are likely to be much more valuable in later life, and more likely also to be retained in memory, than isolated and single texts.

We need, further, to bear in mind that it is not necessary for every child in a class to learn by heart the same collection of passages, hymns, psalms, etc. More and more in our poetry lessons are we training the children to make their own choices, and every now and then a very interesting "recapitulation" lesson can be provided by the children, each reciting what they have individually chosen to learn. Might not this plan be adopted with advantage in our religious teaching?

Once again, the dramatic rendering of some of the Old Testament stories gives scope for a good deal of learning by heart on the part of the children without any feeling of weariness or boredom. A class of lively, restless boys learnt much of the Book of Kings by heart by dramatising the story of David and Jonathan, and other stories can be treated in the same way.[1]

[1] See "Plays in Bible Words"—(1) David and Jonathan; (2) Scenes from the Prophets. National Society.

The whole question of memorising is inevitably linked up with the question of *Recapitulation*. It should not really be necessary to point out the disastrous practical results of this practice, as frequently shown in a weary "over-familiarity" with Bible stories on the part of the children—"We're sick of Moses, teacher"—or in a general indifference to the whole subject of religion.

Surely it is better that the children should be keen to hear a story they have heard before rather than that they should know it so well they are only anxious to forget it. Over-recapitulation may destroy the deepest interest in the most wonderful story.

Again, oral reproduction as a method of recapitulation appeals to some children, who "love to tell the story back"; to others it is a nightmare. Two class-rooms in a school known to the writer come to mind. In the one "telling the story back" was enforced on every one, willing or unwilling; in the other it was voluntary, and only for those who wished. In the one class-room the atmosphere was of death; in the other of life.

To avoid the danger of over-recapitulation, we teachers need to be constantly on our guard. Very familiar stories (*e. g.* Easter, Christmas, etc.) need most, not least, preparation; we must get some fresh view-point ourselves upon the story if it is to be alive to the children. Sometimes it is a help to tell a familiar story from some new point of view, *e. g.* the events of Holy Week as they appeared to Cleopas and his friend, the Feeding of the Five Thousand as watched by Andrew or the "lad," the story of the Crucifixion as

it might have been narrated by the Centurion, or by Simon of Cyrene to his sons Alexander and Rufus. After the story of Paul and Silas at Philippi singing songs of praise in the middle of the night, the children may be asked to read a song of praise, *e. g.* Psalm xxxiv., and copy out any verse that reminds them of the story. In such an exercise they are bound not only to think over the Psalm, but to recapitulate the story for themselves—to ponder over it and reflect on it.

In fact the whole aim and object of what is called "Expression Work" (concrete work in Free Drawing, Sand, Plasticine, Map or Model Work, Text or Verse Choosing and Printing, Written Problem-Questions [1] or Essays, etc.) is simply and solely to get the child to *meditate* upon what he has heard—to induce his free thoughts to circle round it. Now a young child, or boy or girl, as a rule, meditates easiest when *doing* at the same time. Hence the test for whether any Expression Work is true self-expression, helpful in religious teaching, is the answer to the question—"Was the child *meditating* on some aspect of the lesson as he

[1] *E. g.* after a lesson on the story of the Journey to Emmaus, which ends with the words, "they told what had happened in the way," the children may be asked to write down what they imagine the two disciples actually said.

Or after an "Easter" lesson to choose the best message they can think of for an Easter card.

Or such questions as the following may be put after lessons on the different subjects. The Parable of the Prodigal Son is an unfinished story. Write, if you can, its concluding chapter.

Do you think it was right to kill Athaliah or not?

Do you think the Lord of the Vineyard was a master you would like to have worked for or not? Give your reasons.

Who could have told St. Luke the story of the Shepherds' Visit?

Write an answer to St. Paul's Epistle to Philemon.

What do you imagine Amos would preach about if he came to our town?

did the work? Is the work an expression of his *meditation?*" It is for the child's sake that the Expression Work is suggested, though it may be an invaluable help to the teacher as an index to the child's mind, for many a little child will draw, and many an older scholar will write, what he would never dream of standing up and saying in words before the class.

But there must be no force, no compulsion, no bribery about Expression Work, any more than about any other form of religious teaching.

Some children will prefer to meditate over drawing; some over printing; some over a problem question. Some (probably a small minority) will prefer to meditate over the words of the Bible passage itself, without any attempt to use concrete material. The work must be free, and therefore *individual;* indeed in our large classes the very number of our children is driving us to such a solution in more than one subject of our curriculum.

CHAPTER IV

THE PROBLEM OF PRAYER AND REVERENCE IN SCHOOL LIFE

THE aim of all our telling of Bible stories, of all memorising of sacred words and phrases, is to help the children to get into touch with God for themselves and to realise their own capacities as spiritual beings. A teacher may easily say that he wishes to teach his children to be reverent and to train them to pray. Reverence and Prayer are big words worth reconsideration, for our methods in teaching will depend upon the meaning we attach to them.

"We have no problem of reverence in our school," said the head master of a large Elementary School in the Midlands at a recent conference on this subject. "We have five hundred boys, and I can guarantee that not one of those boys has his eyes open during prayers any morning in the week." (A colleague on this occasion hastened to point out that no such guarantee could be given, except on the understanding that the head teacher never closed his own.) The writer recollects one town school where the teachers at prayer-time were accustomed to ascend into some specially tall chairs so that they might be the better able to inspect the closed eyes of the infants who knelt on the floor around them. In

another town school an inspector of secular subjects arrived somewhat early, and stood watching the children during prayer-time through the glass door. One of the infants remarked afterwards to his teacher, "He wasn't a *good* man, teacher; he kept his eyes open all the time."

The present writer remembers on one occasion introducing the word "prayer" into a lesson to a class of four-year-olds. It produced an immediate motor response from one child. "*I* can pray," he said eagerly, and immediately proceeded to kneel down, clasp his hands, close his eyes, bow his head, and repeat words. When he had finished he looked up delightedly, sure that he had done the right thing.

In all these cases it is evident that the idea of Reverence was that of a bodily attitude, and the idea of Prayer a bodily attitude plus the repeating of certain words. Reverence thus becomes a gymnastic exercise into which the child reluctantly or willingly enters, as he enters into the exercises similarly connected with singing or drill. It is noticeable, too, that those teachers who lay most stress on the importance of a bodily attitude in the children are least prone to insist on it for themselves. A head teacher who repeated the Lord's Prayer, as the writer can remember, with the interpolation "Our Father—now, Albert Collins!—which art in heaven," was quite unconscious that she had two standards of reverence, one for herself and one for the children.

The idea at the back of this insistence on bodily attitude has its foundation, as we might expect, in a real fact of spiritual experience. We grown-up people

know that sometimes, when we have not the mood of prayer upon us, if we kneel down and close our eyes and fold our hands, the mood itself comes, and we pray. But this case is surely not analogous with our school practices. We, as grown-up persons, have, before adopting the bodily attitude, entertained the desire to pray. The attitude expresses the desire, and the attitude is the choice of our own will. If we can get our children to want to pray, the attitude may well take care of itself. The teacher who, having prepared the children in some real way for an act of prayer, having awakened in them and himself some real consciousness of the Presence of God, stops to say "Eyes closed, hands folded," may be bringing the children down to earth just when all want to be in heaven—may be unwittingly thrusting the thought of mere body between the soul and God. It ought to be a platitude by now to say that we cannot lead our children into the Presence of God unless we go ourselves. For the child who lingers outside the Presence a prayerful attitude is a hypocrisy, and his open eyes will learn more of the reality which he is missing by the sight of a teacher's absorption and forgetfulness of him than by many addresses on the importance of Prayer combined with watchful efforts to keep him in order.

As Professor Campagnac urges us, "Let your pupils see in your school, or in your class-room, or in your own practice, a process going on. Do not ask them too eagerly to join in your rites. Let them be spectators. Let them watch. Let them be at a distance, to see what it is that other people do. . . . Allow your pupils to be the spectators of that great transaction as it goes on.

What is that transaction? It is . . . the speech between man and God. If your pupils, not able for the moment to conduct that speech for themselves or to share it with you and the partner of your sublime conversation, are yet smitten by the sight of you engaged in that transaction, then think that they have learnt something."

Moreover, we must remember, in connection with this question of bodily posture, that the child who associates only one fixed attitude with prayer may easily grow into the adult who finds intercourse with God, except in certain places and at certain times, a somewhat unusual and unnatural thing, and who thinks Brother Laurence's prayer over his cooking-pot or St. Paul's "Pray without ceasing" an unattainable ideal.

For this reverence which we desire to generate in our children is nothing less than their consciousness of the Presence of God; and if this God be a God of infinite Love and attractiveness, to be conscious of this Presence must necessarily lead to Prayer. If we have succeeded in giving our children the picture of a God of fear and fault-finding, they may imagine that they are in such a Presence, yet will have no desire to speak to such a God or listen to His Voice—they will not want to pray.

For Prayer, we need to remind ourselves, has, like all communion, its two sides—speaking and listening; and the listening side of Prayer has hitherto scarcely found a place at all in our religious teaching. Our children's lives to-day are mostly full of noise. They run to school and return through noisy streets; they are taught in noisy schools; they play in noisy

playgrounds; they take their amusements in noisy halls; they sleep in crowded, noisy bedrooms, without an opportunity at all for peace or privacy, and on Sunday afternoon they set the gramophone going! Truly Prayer is an aspect of the housing problem, and in the rush of modern life there is no greater need than men's need for privacy and peace. Many of us are wanting this more than we know; anxious faces, nervous hands and strident voices tell their tale. Deep down in the heart of many of us is the desire, equally with the desire to join with our fellows, to get away from them, to rest, to be alone with God.

As St. Augustine said: "If to any the tumult of the flesh were hushed; hushed the images of earth, of water and of air; hushed also the poles of heaven; yet, were the very soul to be hushed to herself—hushed all dreams and imaginings, revelations, every tongue and every sign; if all transitory things were hushed utterly . . . and to the ear which they had aroused to their Maker He Himself should speak, alone, not by them, but by Himself . . . could this be continued, and all disturbing visions of whatever else be withdrawn, and this one ravish and absorb, and wrap up its beholder amid these inward joys, so that life might ever be like that moment of understanding . . . were not this Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?"

That this opportunity of quiet is a need even of our youngest children Dr. Montessori has proved in her well-known "Silence Game," now introduced into many Infant Day-Schools.

"The children sit fascinated by that silence, as if by some conquest of their own. . . . 'Now listen,'

we say, 'a soft voice is going to call your name.' . . . They know that all will be called, 'beginning with the most silent one in all the room.' So each one tries to merit by his perfect silence the certain call. . . . The children, after they had made the effort necessary to maintain silence, enjoyed the sensation, took pleasure in the *silence* itself. . . . They were like ships safe in a tranquil harbour, happy in having experienced something new, and to have won a victory over themselves. This, indeed, was their recompense. . . . The game constantly became more perfect, until even children of three years of age remained immovable in the silence throughout the time required to call the entire forty children out of the room! It was then that I learned that the soul of the child has its own reward and its peculiar spiritual pleasures. After such exercises the children came closer to me. . . . We had, indeed, been isolated from the world, and had passed several minutes during which the communion between us was very close, I wishing for them and calling to them, and they receiving in the perfect silence the voice which was directed personally towards each one of them, crowning each in turn with happiness" (*The Montessori Method*, Dr. Montessori).

Many teachers will want to go further, and definitely associate this period of voluntary silence with the thought and act of prayer. It ought to be possible to evolve something of this sort that will meet the need of our older children. The problem is not an easy one to solve. A church left open on a week-day usually provides the only opportunity for individual peace and privacy in the life of a busy industrial town. Yet that

opportunity is often not made use of, because a young person or adult awakening to the need feels a certain awkwardness and shyness in beginning what is to him a new habit. The opening of the church door is absurdly alarming; some one in the crowded street may see us go in; and when actually inside there is a fear of what may happen to us—will some one drag us into a confessional or ask us if we are saved? More adults than we can guess confess to such unreasonable fears.

Roman Catholics have succeeded in making church-going, even for their youngest children, a more natural and comfortable thing. The writer recalls a large Roman Catholic church in a London slum, where all day long it is possible to see tiny children, and sometimes a boy or girl, kneeling or sitting in the chairs, or wandering round from altar to altar, with dolls or toys or parcels in their arms, they themselves untidied, unwashed and blessedly unclad in Sunday clothes, yet unchecked by any grown-up person—free to move on or stay still, to whisper or be silent as they please, "at home" in their Father's house. It ought to be possible to encourage such a desirable familiarity in many more children; but this means the deliberate *re*-opening of our war-shut churches, and the entirely fresh opening of hundreds of chapels whose doors only unclose on Wednesdays and Sundays.

This need for peace and privacy in worship cannot be met, moreover, by the practice in Church Day-Schools of "taking the children to church." Many of us know well what that means—the anxious marshalling, the cheerful march to church, the vigorous filing into rows, the hum of subdued conversation, the

"hearty" hymn. Such a function has its place in religious education, but it is somewhat of a bustling business after all. The teacher who desires to grow in his children something of the "listening" spirit must make other and more individual opportunities. Volunteers—not too many in number—may perhaps at times go with him into the church after school is over; in school-time itself he may explain with some openness his own practice, and the help it is to him in his spiritual life. Although under present conditions it is probably impracticable, yet, if the church be next door, as it is in many places, a child who is not inclined for listening to teacher's religious instruction on any particular morning, may be even more profitably occupied in the empty church, listening not to the teacher, but to God, or at any rate learning what quiet means—a thing unknown altogether to thousands of our fellow-men. Is it too utopian to dream that in the ideal schools of the future, among the geography- and science-rooms, the dancing- and music-rooms, the workshop and the libraries, there may be found also the open chapel, to be used by those who want it, and not by any who do not feel its need?

Until then, can nothing be done to bring more of a religious atmosphere into the daily religious worship of the Elementary School? It is, as we say, a problem still to be solved. One practical suggestion occurs to us. Not a few children and adults find help in *looking at things* during prayer and praise. Frequently the wall facing the children in our Day-Schools provides nothing more inspiring to look at than an advertisement of Colman's Mustard, a photograph of the latest

" Dreadnought," the attendance board with yesterday's figures, the blackboard with a half-rubbed-out grammar question or arithmetic problem, or a map of the world " showing the chief trade routes." Teacher's desk, with its registers and ink-pot (a hint of the cane inside?), occupies the foreground. It is a far cry from these things to God. The graded Sunday-School movement has shown us the value of " surroundings " in religious worship. The table-cloth and flowers, sometimes candles, the religious picture, the coloured hangings and the simple ritual of putting them out, make, as we are coming to see, a real difference to a young child and to many grown-up people.

Could not something of this sort find a place in the daily religious exercises of the Elementary School? A special picture might replace the usual map or diagram. It could be hung up beforehand and removed directly the " religious period " is over. A tablecloth, flowers, candles, might be added at the teacher's discretion. The children would enjoy the preparation and the clearing away; it might help the sense of that inner preparedness of mind which must precede any act of real Prayer on the part of either children or teachers. For in the last resort in this matter of prayer the teacher is powerless. No coercion is here possible. We may force a child's body into a certain posture, compel his lips to utter certain words, but we cannot force him to pray. Love, joy, peace, gratitude, desire, vision, these are beyond our compelling—they can only come from and to the child himself. Hence to obtain the consciousness of the Presence of God in ourselves and in our children (the absolutely

necessary foundation for any real prayer), certain preliminary conditions are necessary in our class-rooms or school. The writer of the 1st Epistle of St. John suggests them for us—

1. An atmosphere of Love: "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." This means—

2. No fear. "There is no fear in Love; perfect Love casteth out fear, for fear hath torment." While any one of our children is afraid of his teacher or of God he cannot really pray.

3. No hate. "He that hateth is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."

Any ill-will between teacher and child, between teacher and teacher or child and child, cannot but bar out any consciousness of the Presence of God.

Whatever punishments we may still feel obliged to use (if there are any), let us at all costs deliver the religious period from them. The writer can recollect moving inadvertently the register in a Babies' class during the first hour of morning school and seeing the cane beneath; on another occasion, in passing through a passage class-room, it was possible to see two girls standing throughout the religious period behind the blackboard with their hands raised, for punishment, above their heads.

4. No anxiety. "The cares of this world choke the word."

As we grown-up people often find, worry and anxiety deafen us to the Voice of God. It must be so with our children. A child's anxiety as to the correct bodily posture or the accurate remembering of the words or

tune may constitute an effective hindrance to any spirit of real Prayer.

Moreover, for Prayer to be possible for teachers or children, there must be not only these inner dispositions of mind which we have noted above, but there must be *a sense of need*, real things to say, and, most fundamental of all, *certainty of some one there* —of a real Person "always more ready to hear than we to pray, and wont to give more than either we desire or deserve." "Real things to say" the child must have; hence, as has often been said in many places, the choice of the words in hymns and prayers needs careful thought.

A picture comes before the writer's mind of a large school of pigtailed, pinafored and cheerful girls droning in unison one morning in early spring, "A few more years shall roll, a few more seasons wane." Another picture comes up of three hundred little infants, clean, punctual and obedient, with the sun shining on their bright hair and rosy cheeks, exhorting each other and the head mistress to "Do no sinful action, speak no angry word," and reminding each other and their teachers that "There's a wicked spirit watching round us still." And a third picture revives of a number of Yorkshire boys and girls playing leap-frog on a Sunday afternoon outside a little mission room, into which they clattered in their clogs to begin to say at once with loud voices, still breathless with their healthy play, "O Lord, we are very sorry for our sins." They were *not* sorry for their sins. They were not thinking of their sins at all. No one had even tried to bring these to their mind. (Indeed it would

have been difficult, as well as unwise, to do so—for the children had been playing leap-frog quite fairly, with no apparent bullying or unkindness.) Not a child omitted to say the prayer, and yet the exercise was no prayer at all. Even if any of the children felt that God was near, it was quite evident that they did not want to tell Him that they were sorry for their sins. Yet they *could* have prayed, and that not perfunctorily. They were filled, it was easy to see, with a very deep sense of enjoyment of God's gift of life and health, and it is more than probable that they would have joined very sincerely in a thanksgiving for this —for " our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life "—if such a prayer had been suggested to them.

If we may judge from the children's own views on this matter of prayer in various schools where they have been consulted, they wish in their school-times of prayer to thank God for what they are glad about, and to pray for other people.

Taking our cue from this, we may well postulate that Thanksgiving and Intercession, not Self-examination and Penitence, shall be the main notes of our daily religious exercises. Some schools find it helpful to make a literal " Thanksgiving Chain " from the children's suggestions brought from day to day of " things they would like to thank God for," or " things we think beautiful." Some teachers have established a " Roll of Workers," similar to the " Roll of Honour " in the church porch. (The last four years have reminded us all of how many thousands have to risk their lives and spend their strength daily that we may be fed and warmed and clothed.) An increasing number of

schools pray always for their sick and absent members; some Infant Schools celebrate each child's birthday with a prayer. All this represents a real attempt (which ought to be more consistent and widespread) to bring the daily prayers and praises into touch with the children's lives, and to do this needs thought and trouble on the part of the teacher and the entire abandonment of any invariable "form" which is "gone through" without change from week to week and term to term.

We badly need a larger variety of hymns echoing the notes of thanksgiving and intercession. Miss M. M. Penstone's hymns for children[1] never fail to become favourites, both with the infants and the standards; for what fidgety child does not want to sing—

> "For all the strength we have
> To run and leap and play,
> For all our limbs so sound and strong
> We thank Thee, Lord, to-day"?

and what scatter-brained and "inattentive" child does not respond to "Praise to God for things we see"?

It is not impossible that we might materially increase our selection of children's hymns if more teachers would try their hand at composing them. A good tune (say from the English Hymnal), a little knowledge of rhythm combined with a wariness of sentimentality, and surely many a hymn might be produced by a sympathetic teacher which would be probably far better in sentiment, and quite equal in form, to many of the "middle-aged" and depressing hymns which are labelled "For Young Children" and find a place in our hymn-books to-day.

[1] See National Society's Graded Hymn Book.

Moreover, in another direction we teachers might well show more courage. If the first verse of a hymn from some adult hymn-book seems suitable for our classes, it does not follow that we need require them to sing the entire hymn, complete and unaltered. Most churches, in accordance with the more Christian spirit of to-day, omit deliberately the second verse in the singing of the National Anthem. Many congregations would feel a sense of relief if the last terrible verse of such a beautiful psalm as "By the waters of Babylon" might similarly be left out. Let us, in the interests of our children, select and, if necessary, rigorously revise the hymns and Psalms we bring to them. It will not do for us to wait till they are "revised" for us—our children may have left school by that time!

The introduction of a new hymn or Psalm needs also some thought and skill. A memorable first impression determines, as we know, the later recall. The teacher must be afire with anything he wishes to teach—so full of it that he has at least learnt it by heart himself and is independent of the book! We must lead up to the words as carefully as we should lead up to the introduction of some beautiful poem; arousing the mood of the hymn or psalm or prayer —joy or peace or thought for others—weaving into the preliminary talk any difficult word or phrase; explaining only so much as is necessary for the child to appropriate the general feeling of the words; and being careful never to lose, by over-practice or repetition, any of the freshness which is so akin to reverence. Better, indeed, that the children should not know the

words or be so perfect in the tune, than that they should have begun to say or sing those words *to the teacher* instead of saying or singing them to God.

There is nothing easier than to get children to sing hymns and say prayers to the teacher, especially if they like the teacher, or are a little afraid of him. It is far more difficult to lead the children either to praise or pray. If the children are not ready to pray, the prayer is of little use to them; if they are not even desirous to praise, it profits them little to sing a hymn.

The re-introduction of an old hymn or familiar Psalm naturally needs just as much thought and care as the introduction of something fresh. With a fair repertoire of suitable hymns, for example, the children will not often need a fresh one. An old hymn may well make its appearance many times in different connections and as emphasising different thoughts.

Such a hymn as—

"God has given us a Book full of stories,
Which was made for His people of old.
It begins with the tale of a Garden,
And ends with the City of Gold.
But the best is the story of Jesus,
Of the Babe with the ox in the stall,
Of the song that was sung by the Angels—
The most beautiful story of all.

"There are stories for parents and children,
For the old who are ready for rest;
But for all who can read them or listen,
The story of Jesus is best.
For it tells how He came from the Father,
His far-away children to call,
To bring the lost sheep to their Shepherd—
The most beautiful story of all."

(Nat. Soc. Graded Hymn Book.)

may usher in the season of Advent in a Church Day-

School, or in any kind of school, sum up a lesson on "The making of the Bible" with the Standard VII, conclude a lesson on the Parable of the Lost Sheep with Standard II, or form a thanksgiving for any Bible story, sum up a lesson or course of lessons on Church History or Foreign Missions. Some hymns are more suitable for the general assembly and dismissal of the entire school or department, others are more suitably introduced by the assistant teacher in his own class-room in connection with the lessons he is actually giving. Many a lesson, indeed, finds its best immediate "Expression Work" in some hymn or prayer. In one school known to the writer the older children always found much pleasure in devoting one morning a week to the choosing and printing of some hymn emphasising the thought of the Monday's lesson, and another morning with similar work on the choosing and printing of some suitable prayer or Psalm.[1]

[1] The following two hymns are examples of the way in which a teacher may fit suitable words in key with young children's needs to tunes which are also full of the right spirit.

(1)

"Let us thank the Heavenly Father
For the friends we love to-day,
In the houses we inhabit,
And the streets in which we play.
Father, mother, brother, sister,
And the creatures great and small,
For God made them and He made us
To be comrades to them all.

"Let us thank the Heavenly Father
For the friends we love to-day
Who have passed the gate of Dying,
Yet are near us as we pray.
And the friends we must remember,
Who are far across the sea;
God is near them; He is near us
As we carol joyfully."

(*Tune*: "Daily, daily," English Hymnal.)

(2)

"Dear, loving Father of us all,
We lift our hearts above,
And sing our song of praise to-day,
Rejoicing in Thy Love.

"Dear, loving Father of us all,
Our thoughts of love shall go
To cheer the people sad at heart,
And dwelling here below.

"Dear, loving Father of us all,
O lift their hearts above,
And all shall sing a song of praise,
Rejoicing in Thy love."

(*Tune*: 93, English Hymnal.

CHAPTER V

THE CHRISTIAN METHOD IN EDUCATION

THE problem of religious education must necessarily involve the problem of method, and this problem of method may not be narrowed down to the devices employed in that period labelled " for religious instruction," but must cover the whole field of secular teaching. A belief in the truth of Christianity, if consistent, cannot but make a difference to all our dealings with children. The practical question, therefore, for the teacher (which is indeed more fundamental than any other) is " How shall we treat our children religiously? " " What shall be our religious method of education? "

Now the teacher who desires to call himself a Christian can find no better " method-book " than the Four Gospels, no more convincing answerer than the Great Teacher Himself.

The answer is arrestingly original. When we come to Christ, as parents or teachers, to ask Him how to manage our children, what attitude to adopt towards them, He tells us that we are to try to manage our children as God manages us, to treat them as God treats us, to adopt towards them the attitude God adopts towards us. " Be ye therefore perfect, *even as* your Father which is in Heaven is perfect."

This is not a platitude, but the most revolutionary saying in all educational literature. For it is surely more true to say than many imagine, that while we tell our children very many things *about* Christ, we do not often tell them *what* He taught, nor do we teach them *in His way*.

What is then the *Christian method* in education? It is to treat our children consistently, whether in the religious period or outside it, with that method of Love by which God deals with us.

We want the children to feel sure that God's love is always waiting for them, as the father in the parable waited daily for his son; that God is never turned away from any one of His children; that it is only we who turn away from Him.

Therefore, as we have suggested many times, it is vitally important never to cloud for the children this idea of God. "God won't love you if you're naughty," we say thoughtlessly to a child, and it is the most profoundly untrue saying. Where, indeed, would any of us be if it were true? "While we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

A mother, of whom we knew, used to hang up in her nursery a picture of a Great Eye, and written beneath were the words, "Thou, God, seest me." Her children looked and shuddered; God was to them the Great Fault-finder. Never must we associate God in the children's minds with the thought of fear or anger or disease or war.

How is a child to believe in a God of Infinite Love if he is led to think that, as many grown-up people have believed, "God sent the war"?

We are more and more coming to realise that it is *not* God who makes war, but man. War is no glorious and Divine act, but a hideous and dreadful catastrophe brought on the world by man's lack of fellowship—by the sins of all of us. So our instinct is right in not wanting to bring its dreadfulness to the consciousness of children, but often this right instinct expresses itself in attempting to lead the children to think of war, if not as dreadful, then merely as amusing. None of the men who have been out in the trenches desire at the bottom of their hearts that their little children should think of war as a *game;* they know that modern warfare is not a game, but a horrible and soul-destroying *business*. Therefore we teachers and parents need to be very careful *how* war comes to our children; we need to consider whether we should continue to provide them, as we commonly do, with toy guns, toy soldiers, imitation explosives, miniature uniforms.

Not long ago I was watching a two-year-old child in a Yorkshire town playing on the seat of the electric car with a toy field-gun. He was using it, as children often do, not for the purpose for which it was intended, but for purposes (quite innocent) of his own. A policeman entering the car moved near to join the child in his play, and immediately showed him how to point and fire the gun. The child began at once to aim and fire off the gun at his fellow-passengers, beginning with his would-be kindly instructor. May not that boy later on catapult unthinkingly a wild bird, and find it difficult to believe that war is not a splendid pastime?

Surely a teacher or parent aiming to work on the *Christian* method of education will not want to make

it more difficult than it already is for the children to love their fellow-men or to believe that wars must go from the face of this earth of ours before the Kingdom can come "on earth as it is in Heaven." Surely God's purpose for His children is that they should work together for the coming of this Kingdom of Love.

But the teacher's and parent's practical problem is how to make the ideal of love *attractive* to the children, how to make the efficacy and power of love at all credible to them.

For this to be so, our children must see love and be drawn by it; they must witness the love of God through ourselves. They will be led to believe that God's love is always turned to them if they become confident that ours is the same. Our love must, then, be always waiting for them, like God's. Never can we say to a child, "If you do that, teacher won't like you," for we do not want that to be true. The writer recollects a busy father who stopped an absorbing piece of literary work to mend his little son's broken engine. "I want him to come to me *later on*," he said apologetically to his wife when she chided him for his weakness.

The teacher's or parent's sympathy over the child's precious "secret" or expected pleasure, or his bit of crude handwork of which he is so proud, is all helping to build up in him the thought of God's sympathy as still more to be counted on. "If a man love not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, Whom he hath not seen?" It is strange and humiliating to think how children build their thoughts of God not infrequently upon our poor human imperfection. A mother known to the writer was asked by her small

son at bed-time : " Is God nicer than *you*, Mummy ? " " Yes, ever so much nicer," was the answer. " Then He *must* be nice," murmured the child, settling comfortably to sleep.

Further, both teachers and parents have an opportunity of letting the children feel the stability and justice of our love in the very common difficulty of " tale-telling." We are often inclined to pass over or suppress, with some emphasis, any attempt at " telling tales " on the part of our children. " He's hit me, teacher," " It's *my* pencil, not hers," " It is not fair," " Please, teacher, she . . .," " Please, teacher, he . . ." The complaints weary what we call our nerves all through the day. It is this felt nerve-weariness that makes it difficult for us to analyse the situation. Why does the child " tell tales " ? Often the habit is induced in him by the highly regrettable practice of setting one child to spy on the class during a teacher's absence, to report or write down the names of those who talk or misbehave. But whether this be so or not, surely the child " tells tales " because he feels that something which has happened is wrong, which he himself cannot see how to set right, and he comes to teacher or mother as to some one who has, he thinks, riper experience and more wisdom than he has himself. This expectation ought not to be disappointed. Surely, too, if we are to lead our children to look for and work for the ending of war in all its forms, and for an increasing settlement of disputes by the use of arbitration and conciliation, we ought to be glad of every opportunity of training them in the use of such a method in their childish quarrels.

To spare time to investigate these quarrels—to get the children into the habit of weighing evidence, of hearing both sides, of deciding by "common-sense" rather than by fists, of taking an award given against you without repining—this surely is not a less important part of the teacher's work than the three R's, or any other lesson in the curriculum. The ideal underlying the phrase "League of Nations," the hope that the recent war was "the war to end all war," must not be denied to our children now that the "years of peace" have come.

But the Christian method of education challenges our current practice in still more vital particulars; for it implies—this method of love—an abandonment of fear as a cultivated motive in education. "Perfect love casteth out fear, for fear hath torment." There are thousands of children every day in our schools who are so tormented. It is no uncommon sight to see a little child running breathlessly to school, sobbing sometimes as he runs, with anxious, scared face; not running because he is so glad to come to school (that is a different kind of "run"), but because he is afraid of what will happen to him if he gets in late.

"It wasn't *our* fault, Mummy, was it?" sobbed two little infants in a Midland school who had been caned for unpunctuality. "You *did* send us late, didn't you? It *wasn't* our fault. And teacher did it out before the class." "It doesn't seem fair, ma'am, does it?" said the mother, telling the tale to another mother who thought likewise.

The cane or the strap is not *in evidence* in many schools; it is frequently not often used, but in the background *it is there.* In one town of three million inhabitants,

it is well known that not a single Elementary school department, boys', girls', or infants', is without it. It is only used "in the last resort," as the teachers would say, but *the pressure of the knowledge that it is there is never removed from either child or teacher.* The reminder is not often conspicuous to a casual or optimistic visitor. A warning note in the teacher's voice, a hint, a vague reference—these are enough to suppress the undesired activity and to produce the appearance (often so obviously only an appearance) of keenness and interest.

"I don't use the cane often," said a country schoolmaster to the writer one day. "It isn't necessary. I stop things *right at the beginning.* Why, this morning, for instance, one of the girls began to twirl a piece of paper. I made the whole class leave off working. That's the way I manage. It scarcely ever comes to the cane." The present writer recollects a discussion one evening in a Lancashire street with a few young mill-hands on the subject of "Continuation Schools." "No, I wasn't sorry to leave school," said one and then another. But "I don't want to go back to school," was the verdict of all, "they canes yer too much! Why, just for looking round or getting a sum wrong! No school for me, thank 'ee." One of the most capable head masters in a large slum area once confessed that the secret of his discipline lay in the fact that "Every boy in the school knows that I could knock him down if I liked, and I would, too!"

Fear underlies our present educational system more than many of us like to confess, and this affects, if we have eyes to see it, our international politics. The sword will not disappear from the nation while

we whip our children in the nursery and cane them in the schoolroom.

While these practices remain and are justified, war will remain and will be justified too. We cannot build a Commonwealth of free citizens upon the sands of Fear.

It is the dread of punishment that teaches the timid to deceive and the brave to degrade their courage into either deliberate rebellion or a cowardly care for their own skins.

Further, doctors are beginning to tell us that this motive of fear produces bodily as well as psychical results. Psycho-analysts are more and more tracing back serious functional and nervous diseases to repression caused by fear, and these repressions in most cases have their date in the very early years of childhood. If there be truth in this, it will help, maybe, the growth of a belief in the Christian method of education; for the Christian method must not only be beautiful—it must be *true*, it must stand the pragmatic test, *it must work*, and prove its truth by its working.

Once again, the use of the motive of fear in education clouds our vision. We do not thus come to know our children; we have no means of gauging their mental capacities, for they do not fully reveal themselves to us, nor can we gauge their moral and spiritual powers, for to be good through fear is not to be good at all.

Punishment, moreover, solves no problem; it often creates an atmosphere in which solution is impossible. "Government," wrote the great teacher Herbart, "quells the act; but discipline" (by which he meant

"influence") "wounds the desire." The wounding of the wrong desire, nay, the destroying of the wrong desire, is the aim of the Christian method of education.

I remember watching in a public park a mother in difficulties with her family, consisting of a girl of ten and a boy of four. The elder child lost temper with the four-year-old, with whom she was charged, because he did what she had told him not to do, and she began to slap him. Her mother, noticing, began to slap her. At last both ten- and four-year-old were reduced to tears, and the problem to be solved was yet untouched; for the problem was how to help the ten- and the four-year-old to get on together, how to develop in the little girl a spirit of unselfishness, motherliness and patience towards her somewhat trying younger brother. This problem could be solved by only one method—the method of Love—the Christian method of education.

But the use of this will carry us further than the deliberate refusal to use compulsion or fear in our dealing with children; for love does not only turn its face towards responding love, but also towards the lack of it. What is the Christian method of dealing with offences when they come, as they assuredly will? It is a method of unlimited mercy and forgiveness. God sends His rain on the evil as on the good. He is kind to the unthankful and the evil. So must the teacher and the parent be.

"How oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him?" asked Peter. "Until seventy times seven," was the answer, and when we have forgiven an offence four hundred and ninety times we have left off counting, as Our Lord intended that we should. If we desire

to work on these lines, shall we find it consistent to devise human-made punishments, to seek reprisal and retribution? It is so difficult in the rush of our ordinary life not to render "eye for eye, and tooth for tooth" with our children. They are rude to us, we become rude to them; they are impatient with us, we catch their mood and are impatient with them; they interrupt us, we interrupt them; they answer back, so do we; they become "edgy," so do we. It is so difficult to keep available an inexhaustible stock of love for those times when the children most need it and we are least inclined to give it—just after some pleasant outing, some treat that we ourselves have given them and that leaves them bored, jaded and cantankerous; on the mornings when unaccountably they get out of bed the wrong side and remain there the livelong day.

These things are difficult; but the Christian method of education *is* difficult—it is the most difficult thing in life.

"Do you want to keep all the hard things away from children by this Christian method of education?" it will be said. "This is soft pedagogy, fit for invertebrates, not for those who have to wage the battle of life." Our answer is that the hard things of life we would not keep from our children even if we could. The daily washing has to be done, the daily duties gone through; going to bed and getting up are part of the schemes of things, which neither we nor our children may avoid; the broken toy with all the will in the world cannot always be mended; no eagerly-planned pleasure can alter the weather, and even in the most interesting home or Day School perhaps

there will always be hard things to be done. The children need our *sympathy* at such times. The assurance conveyed may be merely in our smile, our tone of voice, that we know what life is asking of them, that we ourselves find such things hard to bear. And they need also our *strength*, the relentlessness of love, to carry them through. How often we tell our children less than the truth, nay, even untruth itself, because we would keep from them the realities of life.

Yes, sympathy and strength we must give our children when hard things come upon them, and that how soon! But we shall not of our own ingenuity create "hard things" for them and devise for them punishments of our own making.

If teachers and parents, then, working on the Christian method of education, are not to punish when offences arise, are they to do nothing?

The alternative is not so simple, for the Christian method is not a method of inactivity, but of action, of enquiring sympathy. On such a method we shall not be content to label a child as "naughty," "disobedient," "rude," "cruel," "untruthful" (are these labels ever valuable even if true?), and either to punish or refrain from punishment. We shall not rest until we have penetrated behind the act to the motive, and have asked, and to some extent answered, the question, "Why did the child do this—say that—appear so?"

Our very Christian principle of Brotherhood drives us to get into touch with another's mind, and especially with the mind of a wrongdoer. A child may "lie" from fear of consequences or public opinion, and then it is his courage that we need to build up. He may lie

through nervousness of us, and then we need to mend our manners. He may lie because for him at that stage of life fancy and fact are so closely woven as not to be easily sorted out, and then, if we have not the saving grace of patience and humour, we had best pray for it. A child may be "cruel" because he is full of heedless joy, or full of a desire for knowledge, or full of a wish to vent on some one else the injury he has himself received. The same symptom may have a hundred causes demanding a hundred different treatments. The crude quack treats the symptoms, and obtains a speedy and unstable "cure"; the wise doctor searches for *causes*, and treats not the symptoms, but the disease. Such a method is the Christian method in education.

But all this is a slow business, and indeed the greatest trial that has to be faced by teacher or parent working on these lines is the trial of *time*. There are no quick results to chronicle; there is no royal road to success. Other people will scoff at the slowness of the progress. "How can you let your children do so?" "I should never allow that." "Why don't you stop it at once?" There are a thousand-and-one difficulties to face if we decide to win our victories only with the weapons of love, and not the least of our difficulties is the presence of an adverse public opinion. Any teacher who has worked on these lines will bear witness to this. Such an one needs a very enduring courage. He needs some pluck to fail, or appear to fail, many times, to follow one way only, wherever it lead—the way of love, and this way may lead, for the teacher, through the wilderness of suffering. It has been said that every Cause to

succeed must have its martyrs. Perhaps the Cause of Education has not thriven as it might because it has lacked these. It may be that, in the future, teaching may come to be looked on as "a dangerous trade"; at any rate, it is a highly adventurous one to any who wills to teach on the Christian method of education.

Such a teacher, as we have said, needs pluck. He needs no less imagination and energy. For if we may not overcome our difficulties by compulsion, we must evoke interest, response co-operation. This means time and trouble and thought. It means for many of us teachers that *lesson preparation* must be taken more seriously than we have been wont to take it. It means that when things go wrong, we tend to blame ourselves, and not the child or the class.

We shall be ready, moreover, to blame ourselves not only in the privacy of our chamber, but in all honesty before the children at times. After all, children are very forgiving to us if we allow to them that we are of like passions with themselves. A teacher known to the writer, chafed beyond measure by the importunities of a small boy who would not cease to interrupt the work she was doing, broke out at last into the confession, "You *must* go away—I'm feeling awfully cross." She was surprised by the immediate cessation of the nuisance, the young person remarking as he took himself off, "All right, feel that way myself sometimes."

Children will often concede to the avowed weakness of a "grown-up" what they will not grant to his exasperating strength. We do not help our children by pretending to be perfect. The children will forgive our lapses from the law of Love if we are ready to

acknowledge that they *are* lapses. The teacher working on the Christian method of education will not desire to stand upon a pedestal. We may not be able to live every day on the level of our ideal, but that is very different from choosing a low ideal that we may have the satisfaction of living up to it. The teacher who says, " I punished a boy yesterday because I was dead tired and could not think of anything else to do; but I know there was a better solution; I know it was not Christ's way "—that teacher is not far from the Kingdom of God.

Does the Christian method of education penetrate still further into our current educational procedure? Indeed this is so. The method of love appeals with courage to the highest in the child; it seeks to awaken in him the spirit of love; and love finds its life in giving—" Love seeketh not its own." If we aim to work on such a method we shall not seek to awaken or deepen in the children any merely *competitive* instinct—to do better than your neighbour—but only to awaken or deepen the *co-operative* instinct—to serve and help your neighbour. Does not this challenge altogether our present system of marks and prizes? If we are forced still to adhere to them, let us honestly know them for what they are worth.

Let us go further. Our fundamental principle of Brotherhood of Love implies respect for every brother, whoever he may be. The Christian attitude towards children is an attitude of respect—the child is recognised as a " brother," a person. Indeed, Christ spoke of children as our leaders: " Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter the Kingdom."

In the Christian method of education we teachers must aim to show towards the child the same courtesy we desire the child to show towards ourselves. The teacher who, with her fingers, turns round the head of an inattentive "infant" as she might move a billiard ball, is not manifesting the *Christian* attitude, because she is not showing him either courtesy or respect.

This respect, moreover, will show itself in our continual efforts to help the children to govern themselves. All the movements towards self-government in our Elementary Schools, the institution of prefects and monitors, the provision of private study periods, etc., are symptoms of a growing sense of the respect due to the child's individuality, and are approaches towards the realisation of a Christian method in education. An important part of this self-government, too, will be, as we have said, the settling of disputes by the children themselves and with the teacher's help, in a spirit of love and sympathy and good-will.

All this implies a fundamentally friendly relationship between the teacher and children, an atmosphere of free discussion and free criticism. A teacher, also, working on these methods, will not fear to suffer free criticism of himself; for love is humble, and the teacher is to endeavour to be the incarnation of love. This Christian method implies "Free Discipline," with all the difficulties it involves, with all the consequences of new freedom for those unused to it; for offences must indeed come, and we ourselves offend—do we not?—every day.

So the Christian attitude in education means respect,

reverence, courtesy, humility, even to a four-year-old. It reverences each individual as an end in himself; it loves all, it exploits no one. This principle of "respect for small nations," which many who waged this war hold so dear, has to find expression within the walls of our class-rooms in a respect for minorities, however small and however helpless. Shall we, working on a Christian method of education, be able to go on accepting the system of "form" punishments, punishing the many for the misdoings of one? If our "circumstances" compel us to countenance such a practice, let us honestly express the sympathy we feel, and confess the method anything but the best. Further, we shall continue, in season and out of season, to protest against such "circumstances," to agitate for *small* classes where minorities and individuals can indeed be considered, to work for better conditions of teaching all round.

The N.U.T. has hitherto, perhaps necessarily, concerned itself largely with the teacher's salary. Is it not time that it concerned itself seriously with the teacher's class-room? Only those who have taught week in and week out in a room where other teachers are trying to teach at the same time, only those who have tried to elicit eager response and sustained attention from scholars leaning wearily forward or shifting uneasily in backless desks, know how impossible it is to get a *human* atmosphere, to say nothing of a *religious* atmosphere, under wrong physical conditions. To those who care for the cause of religious education, the improvement of the general teaching conditions of our Elementary Schools—the buildings, equipment, apparatus—

should be a very urgent matter. Teachers feel very deeply (though they do not often express their feeling) the Church's lack of enthusiasm in this matter.

Finally our method of education, Christian or otherwise, will show itself in *what* we try to teach the children during all the so-called " secular " periods, and in *how* we try to teach it.

The teacher tied down to a round of similar duties, limited by an unvarying time-table of hours and days, is subject to an insidious temptation—that of becoming " mechanical," of losing initiative and fire, of becoming involved in class-room minutiæ.

On some days in which we trudge to school this temptation is peculiarly besetting. Over all our work lies the blight of pettiness—its colour all gone out in the biting wind of futility and boredom. The only help in such a mood is to leave the grey valley with its chill wind and dead levels, and to climb the mountain-side, and, if only for a moment, lift up our hearts and take the " larger " view, seeing our " bit " in relation to the whole, our next piece of " class-room duty " in relation to God—to the whole universe of created things, to our deepest selves and our highest ideals.

What are we trying to do? Why is it worth while?

> " What is the beginning? Love.
> What is the course? Love still.
> What is the goal? The goal is Love upon the happy hill.
> All things fail save only Love; all things flag or flee:
> There is nothing left but Love worthy you or me."

Our goal is Love and our method is Love—that our children may feel and express it, and that before it all barriers may go down. Let us test each lesson we have to give, each subject we have to teach, by asking, " How

does it help towards the big things we are at? How does it increase the sense of brotherhood in the children? How does it help them to love?"

Why do we tell *stories* to our children? That we may give them new brothers to love, new friends to understand. Let us throw aside any story which does not do that. Here is some one brave, or kind, or old, or afflicted, or joyous, or full of fun, seen against a background of difficulty, or contrasted in some way with his opposite—here is a stranger whose barrier must be broken down. The story is a splendid barrier-breaker. Nothing makes friends more quickly, as we have said, than sympathy and imagination. (Here comes in our handwork, games and dancing; the brotherhood of play and honest work is very joyful to see and very real to share in.)

Moreover there are other barriers to break, other brothers for our children to love. The heedless, selfish, cruel, cowardly, treacherous, *if we are to help them*, these also we must understand, and even sympathise with, as well as the brave and true-hearted. So we give our history lessons, our tales of the strugglers in life, of life's failures as well as of life's victors, because *tout savoir, c'est tout pardonner*, and infinite Love is infinite forgiveness, and all are sheep of the one Shepherd, to be led at last to the one Fold.

Each subject of the curriculum has, similarly, its great opportunity, implicit and fundamental. What a daily barrier-breaker is the newspaper, annulling for us miles and miles of sea and land! (What a barrier-*maker* it often is, alas!) That geography lesson we are due to give at 11.30 to-morrow morning is not a mere bit

of routine; looking at it with "the larger view" we see in it an opportunity of getting our children to understand new friends, to get nearer to their brothers overseas. That "product" in the geography-book is not a dead thing; it is a gift to us from our brothers. The fire in the school grate means daily heroism and life laid down by our brothers. That lifeless map hanging on the wall is not really lifeless; people live in that land, with their joys and sorrows; that river brings daily bread or daily beauty to our brothers—this is the only thing that makes our lesson worth while at all. In our Nature lessons we bring our children still more brothers to know and love—lowlier brothers, it is true, yet all sharing the Father's care, members of the universal family.

And what about the three Rs? What is worth while here? Is there just mere utilitarian necessity, or here also a help to Brotherhood? Surely the latter. What a bond between us is the daily paper! What brothers do we get from books! How close do letters bring us one to another! We want our children to have all these opportunities, so they must learn, some time, to read and write and cipher. Moreover these things are sometimes hard. (Not *often* hard, indeed, unless we are teaching things at the wrong time and in the wrong way.) Is there anything transfiguring here? Yes, for we prepare for service. One day we shall all be of the brotherhood of workers. (How children love handwork! —here they feel workers indeed.)

To do our "bit" *then*, we must do it *now;* so comes in our "writing" and our "sums," and if they are hard and difficult, the youngest child likes difficult

things, and will do them if he feels our sympathy comforting him and our strength nerving his arm.

For nothing teaches Brotherhood like the bond of sympathy, especially sympathy in a common misfortune, or, better still, in a common good.

But treading the difficult path of a teacher teaching by this exacting "Christian method" of education, "does the road wind up-hill *all* the way?" What is the teacher's reward? This we will consider in our concluding chapter.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHILD'S UNREALISED UNIVERSE

MANY of us can recall that vivid chapter of Charles Kingsley's *Westward Ho*, in which the young Amyas listens spellbound to John Oxenham's yarn of the silver of the Indies, and the boy, going home in delight clasping Salvation Yeo's ivory horn, begins to dream, as he will all his life, and as many another will dream too, of the strange and alluring New World beyond the Western sea.

It is captivating to try in imagination to recover something of the expectancy and ferment of that Elizabethan age. How many a lad or old man found his eyes turning westwards as he stood on cliff or shore trying to pierce the veil of the Beyond, or walked in a day-dream with the thought of it! And then from time to time voyagers returned, telling their tales of this Unknown Continent, bringing strange treasures, firing the land-lubbers at home with desire, until here and there a boy broke loose, or a man left his ploughing to go overseas and make trial of the same brave adventure. And so gradually in men's minds the thought of this unknown Continent, this mysterious New World, grew from guess to hope, and from hope to full assurance.

Is it fanciful to suggest that we to-day are living in the Elizabethan age of education? There is the same

stir in the air, the same sense of expectancy; an infection of adventure and experiment; an increasing courage, a new vision. There are rumours of an Unknown Continent waiting to be explored, of a whole New World lying just beyond our ken. For centuries it has been the dream of poet and philosopher, and now voyagers have actually come back—not many, but here and there some brave adventurer—to show a trophy won and to tell us of the wonders that we miss.

What is this "Unknown Continent"—this "New World"? It is the child's unrealised universe—it is the undiscovered country of the Hidden Self of Man.

The problem of education is gripping people to-day as it has never previously done. War economy for some years has made those who never thought of education in their lives before ask what they mean by it; what use (if any) it really is; what in it can be thrown aside as frippery, and what must be preserved at all hazards.

For the first time in the history of St. Stephen's, members of Parliament have stood up and discussed the essentials of education for the child of nursery-school age, and our young men in their teens have been showing us the weaknesses of the schools in which they have been reared. Our popular novelists and writers cannot keep their hands off this fascinating subject; H. G. Wells, Hugh Walpole, and J. D. Beresford give us lengthy discourses (crammed with thought) upon the upbringing of children and the conduct of our schools. Long ago Bernard Shaw condensed no end of sound pedagogic advice into a preface to *Fanny's First Play;* Mr. Clutton Brock turns aside from the

war to discuss the fundamentals of the teaching process; Sir Harry Johnston leaves big game and Central Africa to give us his fresh (though possibly hasty) views on the curriculum; Professor Bateson and Benjamin Kidd are drawn into the arena.

Meanwhile the practical explorers themselves are at work already, and from time to time, at a conference or in a book, they find time to tell us of their discoveries and adventures and conclusions.

Mr. Holmes' "Egeria" in her Sussex village, Mr. Arrowsmith at Mixenden, Mr. Caldwell Cook at the Perse School in Cambridge, Professor Yorke Trotter and Monsieur Dalcroze, Mr. Homer Lane at the "Little Commonwealth," Dr. Montessori in the slums of Rome, Professor Dewey, Mr. Macmunn, Mr. O'Neill—we could go on adding to the list of those educational pioneers who have set out in very different directions, voyaged under very various conditions, and yet who bring back a marvellously uniform report—an arrestingly similar conclusion.

They maintain, with astonishing unanimity, that there lies in each child—not in a few, but in *all*—powers and qualities that we none of us suspect. These powers may be those of the poet, orator, dramatist, artist, musician, inventor, thinker, governor; they tell us that *under certain conditions* every child's personality expands, hitherto unknown capacities stand revealed, surprises shower upon us, an inner universe unrealised by us and by the child comes into manifestation. We can fix no limits to education, because we can fix no limits to the child! Herein lies the lure of the Educational Adventure; herein the fascination of the

teacher's profession. *Under certain conditions* the child's personality expands and this inner universe is revealed: *under what conditions?* Again we find a surprising unanimity in the answer. The conditions are rigorous; without the fulfilment of these conditions the result will not be achieved. (As well expect to bring a chemical experiment to a successful conclusion without laboratory conditions.) They are twofold—

(1) *Freedom from coercion.* (2) *A right environment.*

The first of these conditions gives us the reason why so few people as yet believe in the existence or possibility of this Unrevealed Universe. It is so seldom manifested, because the conditions for its manifestation do not exist. As we have said before, our present educational system is founded almost entirely upon an underlying substratum of fear and coercion. Under such conditions it is impossible to discover the children's hidden potentialities. As a great teacher has reminded us, we might as well expect to discover the life-habits of butterflies by studying a case of dead specimens pinned on corks.

"I have been teaching forty years, and ought to know something about children," said an elderly elementary teacher on one occasion to a pioneer teaching according to the new ideals. "Ah," thought the pioneer, "but if you had been teaching forty days under right conditions you would know more."

To discover the full potentialities of the child we must seek for him the right conditions. This means, in most cases, that we must *create* the right conditions.

One of the most interesting experiments in the direction of providing these two essential conditions

has, as we all know, been worked out by Dr. Montessori in the case of children three to seven years old, and later on of children of seven to eleven. For these children (slum children in Rome or Milan) she provided—(1) freedom from coercion within the (2) "right" environment. By right environment Dr. Montessori means an environment that is suited to the children ("a children's house," she calls it), and which presents material that of itself calls out from these free children intense interest, concentration of mind, effort of will; that provides for them, in fact, *continued self-chosen* occupation. This concentration of mind on the part of the child, this act of absorbed interest, this effort of will, is always followed, so Dr. Montessori avers, by an *expansion of personality*, by an *awakening of the child's inner universe.*

A few examples of this expansion may serve for illustration, drawn from Dr. Montessori's experimental school as described in *The Advanced Method*, Vol. I.

(1) A three-year-old child from the San Lorenzo quarter in Rome one day (after a prolonged period of restlessness and inattention, which began on his entrance into the Children's House) became absorbed in a piece of the provided material (in this case the placing and arranging of the geometrical insets). He continued his work with entire concentration while the other children did their occupations and even marched round him singing. He and his material were lifted up and placed on a little table apart. He continued his work until he had succeeded in arranging the insets correctly forty-four times. Upon the accomplishment of this he turned and surveyed the room with a "satisfied air," as if

awakening from a refreshing nap. After this awakening he was *a different person;* Peace was attained with Joy.

(2) A three-year-old child who had always slavishly imitated her five-year-old sister, one day succeeded in dealing successfully with another piece of the provided material (the pink tower). In her quiet joy at this accomplishment she forgot her sister and became *an independent personality;* Peace and Joy were attained, with new Power.

(3) A four-year-old, always clumsy and incapable, became one day similarly absorbed in a piece of the presented material. He accomplished successfully his self-imposed feat, and his access of power immediately began to manifest itself in other directions; he joyfully carried glasses of water, etc., with the greatest care and skill. Once again we see the manifestation of *Peace, Joy and Power.*

(4) A child (under five years) who could not be prevailed upon to speak at all during the day-time, became at last interested in one form of the material (the insets). After much effort she succeeded in placing them aright, and at once broke into speech—"Come and see," she cried. Again we see *Power* leading to a desire for *Communion* and *Friendship* with other fellow-beings—to *Love.*

After this stage, Dr. Montessori tells us, there will be constant evidence of this desire for fellowship, "spontaneous outbursts of affection"—"a beaming smile, a furtive touch, a running up to embrace." The writer recollects in a nursery school (worked very much on the lines of a Montessori "Children's House") a four-year-old boy, who broke from the game he was

playing merely to run across the room to another child, say "I love you" with a radiant smile, and recommence his game.

In all these and similar cases, Dr. Montessori brings to our notice the *explosive character* of this expansion. It is a kind of spiritual "conversion." It marks a definitely new stage in self-development.

And the natural history of this expansion shows a remarkable similarity, she tells us, in all the different cases she has observed. It begins with—(1) *a preliminary period of anarchy*, disorder and chaos, as if the child were striving to evolve internal unity and order.

(2) *A period of intense concentration* comparable to the "meditation" of the mystic; a task is repeated over and over with a special interest and intensity of attention.

(3) *The culminating effort ending in the awakening of new life.* "He becomes a personality who has reached a higher degree of evolution."

(4) This interest in one occupation spreads to other occupations and leads to new activities and discoveries; disorder disappears, a period of achievement is followed by a *period of contemplation*, and this again by a *desire for fresh work.*

(5) Then emerges *a consideration for the work of others;* a *voluntary obedience* (the *last* fruit, not the *first*). The individual of his own free will puts himself under the law; he begins consciously to co-operate; the work of self-discipline has begun.

"After this it will happen all at once that the child will work by himself, quite independently of the others, almost as if to develop his own personality."

This work of self-discipline (*self*-control, let us notice, *not* "mother control" or "teacher control") will go on; *the inner universe of the child is finding realisation.*

Let us now ask the question: *What kind* of an inner universe is revealed? what develops from this hitherto unrealised universe of the child's personality? Dr. Montessori answers that *lofty qualities* emerge, and these from every child, given the desired environment—given the perfect liberty for spontaneous development; patience is manifested, perseverance, gentleness, politeness, affection, serenity, initiative, energy and enthusiasm, consideration for others, voluntary obedience and self-control. Life, Peace, Joy, Love, Law, Self-determination.

We must specially note the emergence of *Joy*, as soon as the children begin to be concentrated in attention and to develop themselves. "Joy," Dr. Montessori tells us, "is the indication of internal growth." Joy, then, is the Liberator of this unrealised universe. Joy, in Freedom, is the condition for the emergence of the Divine. "Where dwells enjoyment, there dwells He." For Life, Peace, Joy, Love, Law, Self-determination, the qualities manifested by the growing soul in freedom with the right environment, reveal also the inner universe's essential nature, for they are *the qualities of Divine Being.*

The child's inner universe is Divine. Each child is a manifestation of God, new-sprung from the Fountain of Life. In fear, in bondage, this Divine universe cannot manifest itself; in freedom and right environment it can.

We need not then trouble to develop separately these

Divine qualities, to train our children in patience, perseverance, politeness, unselfishness and the rest. If we will give them freedom and such environment as calls forth voluntary interest, concentration, continued effort, the Divine qualities will of themselves emerge—we shall see the unexpected—the Kingdom of God will come " on earth as it is in Heaven."

Herein then is boundless encouragement for parents and teachers alike. There are no limits to education, for there are no limits to the capacities of the child. *Nurture* is everything; *environment* is all that matters; the child's possibilities are boundless.

But the big words " Nurture," " Environment," warn us that we have set foot on very debateable ground; we have involved ourselves in the meshes of a very acute controversy. For, in opposition to those who stake all upon *Nurture*, there is a considerable body of biologists and educationalists who stake all upon *Nature*. The children's possibilities are *not* boundless, these rejoin; they are strictly bounded by heredity. It is absurd to say that all is possible to a child; nothing is possible that is not included in his original endowment. Only the potentialities of his original germ-plasm can be realised. You can give freedom for native endowment, if you like, but by this the child is limited all along the line. He can only manifest those qualities which are inherited from his past ancestors. You cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, however hard you try. It is not *school* that matters so much as *stock*. Clip the wings of your adventure; the problem is predetermined after all.

Then the opponents will fall to fisticuffs on the good

old problem of the drunkard's child reclaimed from the slums who turns out a responsible, efficient citizen, and the offspring of the saint who turns out to be an irredeemable sinner.

May we suggest that this controversy (like the ancient dispute on "Free Will") is merely a controversy of words, where both sides really mean the same thing and express it in different ways? For, on the one hand, we may answer to the upholders of the "Nature" theory, that no one knows what is in the original germ-plasm; its limits are undiscoverable, and may therefore be infinite for all that we can tell; and to those who hold to the "Nurture" theory, we may answer that no right environment can influence a child apart from his response to that environment; no freedom of condition can make a child free until and unless he frees himself. This, then, is perhaps a controversy that makes no difference. But we must not too easily make such a generalisation; for although this controversy is one that makes no difference in *thought*, yet it tends to do so in *practice*. The point of view to which we incline in the matter under dispute is almost certain to express itself in our educational method.

The temptation that besets those who place most reliance upon the nature, the native endowment of the child, is to begin to limit the environment that is to be given to him. "It is not worth while to waste time in giving the best opportunity to *some*—to *most* individuals," is the opinion tacitly held or openly stated. "Choose your picked specimens and concentrate on them." An eminent educationist recently wrote a pamphlet describing what she believed should be "the

education of the *majority*." "The yokel minds—you can do little with them," is a not uncommon estimate often given of village children and their fathers and mothers. An association called the "Federation of British Industries" recently issued a circular in which the Committee "very strongly advise that in selecting children for higher education care should be taken to avoid creating . . . a large class of persons whose education is *unsuitable for the employment which they eventually enter*."

Now, first of all, this denial, or attempted denial, of opportunities hampers the work of education, whose function it is to select and present material which shall inspire the use of the child's inner powers. This limitation of material, this narrowing of arranged environment, hinders the realisation of the child's inner universe and the growth of his personality.

On the other hand, the teacher's belief in the boundless possibilities of the child encourages that teacher to seek the right environment, and to provide the necessary freedom to make use of it; it inspires a more intelligent educational method; it is more likely to get encouraging results.

Moreover, another harm may be wrought. Many of us are coming increasingly to believe in the power of thought—that, in short, *thought is the creative power in the universe.* If this be so, if thought has any creative power, then our thought of the child can help him or hinder him; our belief in him and our sense of the Infinite within him can help him to discover and to realise that Infinite for himself. If it be true that behind our conscious mind lies in each one of us an

unconscious mind, a " transcendental self " (as Du Prel puts it) that is in touch with the Divine Spirit, and thus potentially in touch with all other similar selves, then the way we think of the child—our belief, for example, that our own inner " unrealised universe " is in touch with his, and both with God—will make more difference than we can perhaps imagine to our practical effect upon him.

Let us next consider the danger that besets the " Nurture " school of thought, consisting of those who lay most stress upon environment, who aver that there are no limits to education, for there are no limits to the possibilities of the child. The danger lies in a temptation to discouragement. Holding such a view, we may find ourselves hit hard by the facts of life. We discover, if we are thoughtful observers, surprises of evil in what we shall call the best environment. Those who talk about children as " little angels " are, we notice, those who have least practical acquaintance with them. Are there not evidences for " original sin " as well as for original goodness? Does not some real truth lie behind such a familiar phrase as " born in sin " and " the children of wrath "?

Given ideal conditions, would all children equally manifest Divine qualities? Some of us would answer unhesitatingly, " Yes." Some of us are compelled to side with those who would answer this question with both a " yes " and " no."

Yes, to a surprising degree. We do not know how wonderful our children are, nor how wonderful are men. We can scarcely imagine the change that we should see in the world to-day if all were *free in mind,*

if all had learned, or were in the process of learning, to *think* with independence—and with courage. Poets, orators, artists, musicians, prophets—we might have these in thousands, not in twos and threes. We do not know what Democracy will not reveal when Democracy has had an education worthy of the name. Surely we may answer our question with a "Yes." Let us think further. *Given ideal conditions, would all children equally manifest Divine qualities?* "No," for many of us hold that the child is limited in time and space. Is it possible to believe that all children can be, not passable and efficient craftsmen (that we can accept), but artistic geniuses of a high order? Is it possible that all children can be not merely appreciative listeners and moderately capable performers, but Beethovens and Wagners? Will not the children's inner universe manifest itself in different and individual specialisation? We can only theorise on these matters and speculate more or less wildly. But as we ponder upon our life's experiences and look out upon the world, watching with some intentness the men, women and children who live in it, some of us cannot resist the conclusion that differences in individuality are not entirely accounted for by one or both of the twin factors of physical heredity and of environment. We carry away from our observations the ineradicable conviction that we are watching a multitude of individuals who are at very different epochs of spiritual development, at very different stages in their manifestation of their inner Divine nature. If it be true, as the Nurture school are wont to suggest, that each individual reproduces in brief the entire previous history of the race,

then it is also true to say that some individuals do this more rapidly than others, and some appear to omit certain stages altogether. Many children may, in their early years, manifest tendencies to cruelty or to combativeness or egoism; here and there in a family we come across a single individual who has shown from the start traits of an opposite nature, who has always been "unselfish" or "peaceable" or "tender-hearted." Many children may appear in early years to be mainly absorbed in sense impressions or motor activities. Here and there we come across a child philosopher or thinker. Some souls give us the sense of being "old," some impress us as "young" and "immature." A mother and son come to the writer's mind where the son is incomparably *older*, from a spiritual point of view, than his own mother. One human being all through his life seems bound to struggle with "elementary" temptations of sensuality—of bad temper. Another—member perhaps of the same family—has no temptations of that kind at all; we get the impression that he has passed through them long ago. To what is due this difference in attainment? Is it entirely accounted for by environment or heredity, or both? If all is under law, the very individual body and brain must be the result of causes. Without doubt, we human beings leave this earthly life *unequal* in mental—in spiritual attainment. Is it fantastic to imagine that we did not start this life on a uniform level of equality? Do not the facts point that way?

This is but a speculation, though a speculation forced by life upon thoughtful teachers, and such conjectures may help us in trying to answer so staggering a problem as that presented to a teacher in a cripple

school known to the writer. This teacher is constantly being challenged by a girl in her teens paralysed from birth—" God isn't fair, teacher—*how is it fair for me?*" Truly a God of Love must justify Himself to the human soul in His dealings with the *individual*, not merely with the mass. " The solidarity of the human race " is small comfort to the particular sufferer, who longs to feel with Tennyson, that " not a worm is cloven in vain," that he, too, is an end in himself, and is not merely exploited for the benefit of the majority.

That the seeming inequalities of life really come under the reign of Law we must believe, though we may have to be content to leave the problem of inequality as a mystery, and trust God with the issue. After all, the important thing is that we should all make the best of what we have got, in body, brain and soul, whether we know why we have got it or not.

But when we view the children we teach, the people we mix with, as evolving spiritual personalities at very different stages of development, we are, at any rate, delivered from any great discouragement. All have the Divine within them. It is true that all are not fully conscious of it, and all have not begun to co-operate with it—but the final result is inevitable. " Them also I must bring, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd."

" All men become good creatures, but *so slow*," is a painful truth; but

" *All men* become good creatures," and nothing else really matters.

> " I shall arrive; what time, what circuit first I ask not.
> In some time, His good time, I shall arrive."

For the law that works so slowly and so inexorably is the Divine law of love.

But we who believe in the Christian method of teaching, who believe in religious education, are not thereby denied the *expectation of Miracle.* Evolution is usually slow, but the process has leaps and bounds. Water at a certain temperature suddenly becomes ice; ice becomes water; water becomes gas; a crystal shoots across the microscope's field of view in the twinkling of an eye; the chick in a single moment bursts the shell. The manifestation of the Divine may appear limited in its expression through æons of time, but at last there comes a new stage, a step forward, happenings that never happened before, a fresh factor comes into operation, and then the child, the man *in union with God,* can abbreviate the slowness of spiritual Evolution, for with such union there are no limits to the rapidity of his advance; the only limits are in his own co-operation—in short, in his religion.

Many things point to the fact that the world is to-day on the eve of a New Age.[1]

> " Each age is an age that is dying
> Or one that is coming to birth."

An interesting analogy between the spiritual history of the individual soul and that of the universe has been worked out by Judge Troward in a book that might be read with profit by every teacher—*The Creative Pro-*

[1] It is immensely interesting to note that two thinkers so diverse from each other as Benjamin Kidd and Professor Bateson reach a conclusion that in the one case is a plea for the permeation of this world, " organised for war," by a new influence—" the emotion of the ideal," and in the other is a similar plea that " extra national progress be recognised publicly as the highest and the one indisputable good "—" that truth and beauty, science and art, wisdom

cess in the Individual. Evolution, he maintains, has its beginning in the thought of the Divine Being concentrating upon Itself in contemplation, and thus manifesting Itself as the primal omnipresent ether; through contemplation of Itself and Its Creation a new stage is then reached in the Divine Life—a stage of Self-consciousness. This new stage expresses itself in a new activity; there is a *localising* of activity in the development from the primal ether of nebulæ, star systems, worlds, at one end of the scale, and at the other end atoms, electrons, etc. All this constitutes that stage of evolution which we term the inorganic stage. Then comes a fresh step forward, a new chapter in the history of the Universe, for *Life* makes its appearance and develops. Then follows another new chapter, for life—vegetable, animal—manifests itself at last in individuality, personality, soul; *Humanity* appears and develops. Now a still further stage is possible, for man comes to *self-consciousness;* he rises to recognise his Origin and to unite himself with It. Conscious co-operation between himself and God becoming possible, he can now draw on infinite resources. A new era has begun, and in the new era fresh Divine powers will manifest themselves in man. They are manifesting themselves already to-day. Did not indeed this manifestation find its prophecy in Christ? Did not the Incarnation inaugurate this new era?

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and loveliness—they are the only aims which in the long run are worth pursuing"; conclusions which in effect are recognitions of the religion of Christianity as the only solution for a world civilisation tottering to its fall. See Kidd's "The Science of Power" and Bateson's "Science of Nationality," in the *Edinburgh Review* for January 1919.

Have not these new Divine powers been in manifestation ever since, here and there, in stray instances, in the Saints of all the ages? May we not take courage to believe that now, in union with the Divine, man may be able—slowly maybe, yet inevitably—to overcome even on this earth the bonds of space and time, the spectres of disease and death and ill-will, and to manifest more and more fully the Divine qualities of Love, Joy, Peace, Beauty and Wisdom?

As Robert Browning put it in that last vision of "Paracelsus":—

> "All tended to mankind
> And, man-produced, all has its end thus far;
> But in completed man begins anew
> A tendency to God. Prognostics told
> Man's near approach; so in man's self arise
> August anticipations, symbol, types
> Of a dim splendour ever on before
> In that eternal circle life pursues.
> For men begin to pass their nature's bound,
> And find new hopes and cares, which fast supplant
> Their proper joys and griefs; they grow too great
> For narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade
> Before the unmeasured thirst for good; while peace
> Rises within them ever more and more."

This is the kingdom "on earth as it is in Heaven" for which we daily pray and work.

And here is the inspiration for us teachers. Some of us incline to believe that the "kingdom" is going to manifest itself first of all in the realm of education; in the freedom of our children within the ever-widening walls of our homes and class-rooms and schools; in the mutual adventure of the teacher and the child.